STRUCTURED INTERVIEWING

Training Manual
Guide to
Effective Hiring

Indiana State
Personnel Department

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Manual

The quality of employees selected often depends on the quality of the selection tool. The purpose of this manual is to give you the tools you will need to interview and select job candidates more effectively. Each step for developing a useful job-related structured interview is explained in detail. The information presented in this manual will assist you in creating useful selection tools according to the standards currently utilized by leaders in the field.

Popularity of the Employment Interview

Hiring qualified employees is a challenging responsibility. One of the oldest and most popular selection methods used to make hiring decisions is the employment interview. Employers like to meet job candidates face to face and to personally assess each candidate's potential.

Unfortunately, the selection interview may not be the most reliable or valid predictor of job performance. Generally, interviews tend to be subjective and prone to "rater error." That is, interviews often reflect interviewing procedures and/or employers' interviewing skills rather than the applicant's job-related attributes (Maurer and Fay). As a result, the reliability and validity of the employment interview may be questionable.

In fact, may studies have shown the predictive value of the selection interview to be about equal to chance (Pursell, Campion, Gaylord, et al). Yet, almost all employers continue to use this technique to make hiring decisions.

Legal Considerations

Employers must also consider legal requirements pertaining to the employment interview as well as reliability and validity issues. In 1978, the EEOC and other government agencies established the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures. These rules "apply to all selection procedures, including tests and interviews," and , "prohibit discrimination in hiring and terms and conditions of employment." According to the Uniform Guidelines, the selection interview must be valid, or job-related, just like any other test. This means that interviews have to be more objective. It is no longer acceptable or legal to select employees based solely on an employer's personal and often, subjective, judgement.

Step by Step Structuring Method

Industrial psychologists have conducted extensive research on ways to make interviews more objective. A well-known study conducted by Michael A. Campion and Elliott D. Pursell is included in this research: "Structured Interviewing: Raising the Psychometric Properties of the Employment Interview" (Personnel Psychology, 1988, p. 41). This study outlines the steps for developing a structured interview and is considered the most valid, efficient, and defensible interview process to date.

The following steps outline Campion's and Pursell's method:

1. Develop questions based on job analysis.
2. Ask all applicants the same questions.
3. Anchor the rating scales for scoring answers with examples and illustrations.
4. Have an interview panel record and rate answers.
5. Make sure all applicants are interviewed under the same conditions and environment.
6. Assure job-relatedness, fairness, and documentation in accordance with testing guidelines.

The structured interview process described above does have practical application to the everyday workplace. To be effective, interviews should include questions that are job-related and job candidates should be evaluated according to objective standards. Some parts of the job are more important than others. To develop a structured interview, it is best to have interview content and scoring procedures determined by those who are most familiar with the job, the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).

DOCUMENTATION, RELIABILITY, AND VALIDITY

Before we proceed, a word about documentation, reliability, and validity.

Documentation

Documenting the structured interview process is critical and cannot be overemphasized. Every day, employers find themselves having to defend their selection practices, sometimes in court. Selection instruments can be successfully defended when prescribed, documented steps are followed for creating fair and accurate predictors of job performance. Gathering and recording evidence throughout the process of job analysis, interview development and administration, scoring and selection, provides support for the job-relatedness, or validity of the interview.

Documentation Guidelines

The investigative "who, what, when, where, and why" method is an excellent guideline to follow for providing detailed written records. Thorough documentation covers each aspect of structured interview development, panel preparation, and examination of job candidates. These steps are outlined in the following sections of this manual.

Word to the Wise

Without documentation, there is no support to verify the validity of selection methods. If an employer cannot provide evidence that a selection interview is valid, or job-related, even the best structured interview can be challenged in court and hiring decisions nullified. It is critical, therefore, to document each step in the development of selection procedures, including job analysis, and development of tests and interviews.

Reliability and Validity

It will be helpful to explain the relevance of the terms, "reliability" and "validity" as they apply to selection methods and the need for documentation. Reliability is defined as "the extent to which an experiment, test, or measuring procedure yields the same result on repeated trials." Reliability means consistency of measurement. The same amount of water is measured every time you measure a cup of water in a measuring cup. Likewise, a typing test is considered reliable when applicants are tested under equal conditions,

using the same kind of equipment and the same writing sample. Repeated tests will probably yield similar, i. e. reliable, results. That is, an applicant's typing score will remain about the same if subsequent tests are given. Among different candidates, the typing test is considered reliable because you're testing for the same skill using a consistent, or equal, measuring device under the same conditions.

Validity refers to "the accuracy with which a test, interview, other hiring procedure measures what it is supposed to measure," according to Gary Dessler, Professor of Business at Florida International University and author of the text, Personnel/Human Resource Management, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1991, Fifth Edition, p. 49). Validity means using logical measuring procedures, and is, basically, "the degree to which the test or other employment practice is related to or predicts performance on the job" (ibid.. p. 49). A high degree of performance on a valid, or job-related test (or interview) indicates a high degree of performance on the job. In other words, "performance on the test is a valid predictor of subsequent performance on the job" (ibid., p.175). Further, without proof o f the validity of a test or interview, "there is no logical or legally permissible reason to continue using it to screen applicants" (ibid., p. 175).

Validating Employment Tests

In the Employment Testing Manual, labor law attorney James A. Douglas explains the concept of validity as it applies to the employment interview (James A. Douglas, Daniel E. Feld, and Nancy Asquith, Employment Testing Manual, Warren, Gorham & Lamont, Boston, 1989), "validation is the demonstration of the job-relatedness of a test or other selection procedure" (p. 2-18). According to the Uniform Guidelines, explains Douglas, there are three methods for validating employment tests (p.2-18):

- criterion-related validity is a demonstration that the test is predictive of or significantly correlated with important elements of job performance.

- content validity demonstrates that the content of a test is representative of important aspects of job performance.

- construct validity demonstrates that: (1) the test measures a construct, or something believed to be an underlying human trait or characteristic, such as honesty, and (2) the construct is important for successful job performance.

Of the three methods, " content validity" is considered to be the most practical in terms of economy and efficiency. For this reason, the State of Indiana relies on "content validity" to establish the legitimacy of its tests. In developing a structured interview as a valid selection tool, certain prescribed procedures must be followed and properly documented.

JOB ANALYSIS

What is job analysis?

The first step in developing the structured interview begins with the process of job analysis. The purpose of job analysis to comply with legal requirements and to determine the nature of the job in terms of duties and tasks. Job analysis also provides a listing of the various knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed to perform the job successfully.

To meet legal requirements, the job analysis must meet the following conditions:

(1) Must be in writing and relevant to the particular job in question.
(2) Must be derived from several sources.
(3) Must identify the KSAs needed to perform the job.

A through job analysis is therefore documented, obtained from several sources, and includes a listing of essential job duties and corresponding KSAs required for successful job performance.

Douglas (3 - 31) has summarized the components of an effective job analysis:

- Job duties and tasks: The job-related behaviors needed to achieve a specific objective or goal set by the employer. The relative importance of work behaviors and level of difficulty are described.

- KSAs: The associated knowledges, skills, and abilities required for successful job performance are listed.

- Weighting: The relative importance of and time spent performing job duties are indicated.

Sources

As noted, a variety of sources is required to conduct job analysis. These sources would include individual position descriptions, job description benchmarks, and data from Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). Observing incumbents who are performing the job is also a good way to obtain job analysis information. Other available resources may

include supplemental materials such as textbooks, questionnaires, procedure manuals, training materials, job materials, forms, and so on.

The individual position description is used as the primary source for job analysis data because position descriptions describe the particular duties of each position. In addition, position descriptions supply other useful information, such as the relative importance of job duties and related performance standards.

Master job descriptions or Benchmarks may also be used as a background source of information. Master job descriptions describe the duties common to most positions within the class, which may be located in several agencies. However, there may be significant differences between agencies in the performance of job duties. For example, Psychiatric Attendants (4/3 CA4) are employed to care for either adult or child patients, depending on the population served by each state hospital. Similarly, a Clerical Assistant (4/3LD4) at one agency may have little public contact, while a Clerical Assistant at another agency may act as a receptionist.

Obviously, job duties can vary within classifications. A master job description may be used as a general source of job analysis data. However, to develop a structured interview for a particular position, specific information must be obtained from the individual position description.

In addition to position descriptions, an interview developer needs to obtain input from people familiar with the job, who are called Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). SMEs are usually job incumbent and supervisors, but anyone with special insight regarding the job being analyzed can be an SME. For example, SMEs may include professors, training officers, human resource professionals, and other experts. SMEs are consulted to clarify and to supply specific job duty and job requirement information. Statements from the job analysis data such as "assists office manager," or, "has knowledge of data processing," are to generalized to produce effective structured interview questions. It is much more useful to use specific statements, of example, "gathers statistical information for daily log reports," or, " has knowledge of Microsoft Word 6.0 software program."

The interview is this developed from a preliminary list of duties and tasks primarily derived from the position description. Supporting documentation is provided by supplemental sources. The list may be fine tuned by either adding or deleting information, according to specifics provided by the SMEs.

<u>Relative value of duties and tasks</u>

An effective job analysis not only lists job duties; it also designates which duties are of essential and non-essential importance. This information is necessary to weight interview questions appropriately.

To obtain the relative value of job duties, two factors must be considered:

Importance: How important is the competent performance of this duty or task for job success?

Frequency: How much time does this duty or task consume?

A rating scale may be used to assign values to importance and frequency. Rating scales should be simple and balanced, but may be adjusted as needed. The following is one example:

IMPORTANCE	
Rating Criteria	Point Value
Critical	3
Moderate	2
Minor	1

FREQUENCY	
Rating Criteria	Point Value
High	3
Medium	2
Low	1

Other Rating Systems

An excellent example of a more advanced (and highly defensible) rating system that embodies these basic principles is the "Rate the Task Inventory" of the WRIPAC Job Analysis Manual (Willinganz and Langan, Sacramento Municipal Utility District, Sacramento, California, 1993, pp. 30-35).

The WRIPAC method combines the Importance (Criticality) and Frequency (Relative Time Spent) to yield a value rating (Importance of Task). Combining similar components to yield a "value" rating is the recommended procedure for any duty or task rating system chosen to be utilized.

Other Factors to Consider

The job elements tested by most structured interview questions are KSAs and include topics such as education, training, and experience. It is important for the interview developer to obtain these data simultaneously with information regarding duties and tasks, and to have the SMEs verify whether they are related to successful job performance.

Other factors to consider include level of responsibility, degree of stress, work environment, interpersonal relationships, and so on. This information will help the structured interview developer to write questions for the purpose of testing applicants'

KSAs. Also, scoring systems can be developed to rate applicants' qualifications to successfully perform the important and/or frequent duties and tasks of the job for which they are competing.

Check for Accuracy

After the job analysis data is compiled, the results should be checked for accuracy by the SMEs involved in the process. Comments are taken into consideration and if appropriate, changes are made. The resulting job analysis provides the foundation for developing structured interview questions.

The following definitions will be used in reference to KSAs:

KNOWLEDGE

An organized body of information usually of a factual or procedural nature—familiarity gained through experience or association—body of truth, information

EXAMPLES: Knowledge of accounting theories, knowledge of office procedures, and so on.

SKILL

Level of proficiency attained on a task—Can be learned – The ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in executing or performing learned physical tasks

EXAMPLES: Typing skills, carpentry skills, interpersonal skills

ABILITY

Power to perform a given activity which may be inherited, acquired, or a combination of both –The quality or state of being able—physical, mental, or legal power to perform—Competence in doing—natural talent, acquired proficiency

EXAMPLES: typing ability, ability to get along with others, ability to care for others.

QUESTION WRITING

Purpose of Questions

Through job analysis, the primary duties of the job are identified for the purpose of writing interview questions. Structured interview questions are based on factors essential to successful job performance: KSAs, education, training, and experience. The purpose of each question is to measure one or more of the work elements, or KSAs, defined as related to job success. Thus, a structured interview question reflects a valued duty or task, which in turn, requires certain KSAs and/or qualifications.

Guidelines of Question Development

Questions must be job-related and carefully constructed. Effective questions are clear, concise, complete, and generally open-ended.
They are also:

- realistic;
- brief and unambiguous—to the point;
- complex enough to allow adequate demonstration of the ability being rated;
- formulated at the language level of the applicants, not laced with jargon;
- tried out on incumbents to check for clarity, precision of wording; and
- not dependent upon skills that will be learned once the person is on the job (Outerbridge, Developing and Conducting the Structured Situational Interview, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Washington, D.C., 1994, pp. 13-16).

The selection of questions should be wide-ranging enough to cover all aspects of the job.

Structured Scoring System

A structured scoring system sets the structured interview apart from the traditional employment interview and is part of the question writing process. Once questions are developed, the next step is to decide how the candidate's answers will be rated. Campion and Pursell recommend providing rating scales, anchored with examples and illustrations, for scoring answers. SMEs supply "response anchors:" good, marginal, and poor responses to each question. For some questions, developing a rating scale is relatively easy—there is either a right or wrong answer. It is more challenging to develop rating scales for questions requiring the exercise of independent judgement.

Rating scales and response anchors are discussed in more detail in a later chapter. They are mentioned here to ensure that interview developers will create questions designed to produce a wide range of likely responses and accompanying rating scales.

Who Develops Questions?

One of the best ways to develop structured interview questions is to have a small group of four to five SMEs work together on the project. If possible, someone who is familiar with interview question development should serve as the group leader or facilitator.

Types of Questions

The two basics types of interview questions are determined by what the employer wants to know about the candidate: Qualification Determination/Informational Questions and Thinking Exercises.

QUALIFICATION DETERMINATION QUESTIONS

Qualification Determination, or Informational Questions are the easiest to develop. They are used to verify and collect background information about the candidate in terms of education, training, and experience. Questions about the applicant's willingness to perform certain tasks or meet certain standards also fall into this category. This type of question may be close-ended, requiring a yes-not or short, specific answer. Informational questions can also be open-ended, encouraging a longer answer.

Here are examples of close-ended questions:

> Do you hold a current Commercial Driver's License?
>
> How many employees did you supervise on you last job?

There are open-ended:

> What types of computer equipment and software have you used?
>
> Tell me about your experience with . . . .

Here is an example about general educational qualifications:

> What in your educational background has prepared you for a position as an Accountant?

This type of question is frequently followed by requesting more specific information:

> This position as an Accountant requires an individual who can work with Lotus 1-2-3. How has your education prepared you for such duties?

Qualification questions can require the candidate to reveal something about attitude, work ethic, level of confidence, and other indicators of potential for success.

This question might be asked in an interview for Clerical Assistant:

> This position requires a dependable individual who grasps instructions readily, can work independently, and with accuracy. What factors in your work history would indicate that you possess these qualities?

A question for Test Administrator may probe for experience in working with the public:

> Administering tests involves a lot of public contact. How has your experience from work, clubs, volunteer or service organizations, etc., prepared you for meeting the public, answering their questions and providing assistance?

Sometimes a simple yes-no question can get right to the point, as in this question for a Claims Deputy 5/2RR5:

> Have you ever made a determination of eligibility on a claim filed for unemployment insurance?

Or this question for a Nurse/1QC4:

> Do you hold a currently valid Registered Nurse License issued by the Indiana Health Professions Bureau?

<u>Worker Requirement Questions</u>

Worker requirement questions frequently employ "yes-no" answers also. These kinds of informational questions are used to gauge a candidate's willingness to work in less than an ideal environment (cold, noisy, stressful), to do repetitive work, travel, relocate, or work overtime. Another advantage is that these questions can also be used to gain a commitment:

> The individual selected for this position needs to be at the front desk and ready to work at 8:00 a.m. sharp. Can you meet this requirement of strict punctuality?

Worker Requirement questions can be used to ask an applicant about a variety of factors. These questions, however, must meet the same special standard applied to all interview questions. That is, they must assess only worker requirements related to significant job duties in terms of importance and frequency.

<u>Job Knowledge Questions</u>

Job knowledge questions are used to determine how much a candidate has actually benefitted from education, training, and experience.

The following is a series of job knowledge questions from an Employee/Labor Relations Specialist structured interview:

> "What does it mean to reach an impasse?"
> (Answer—To reach a point in negotiations where the parties are unwilling or unable to make further concessions and are therefore unable to make progress toward settlement.)
>
> "Explain the mediation process."
> (Answer—A process in which a neutral party—the mediator—attempts to persuade labor and management to reach a settlement; usually the first procedure utilized in the resolution of an impress.)
>
> "What is the role of the mediator?"
> (Answer—To bring the parties together by clarifying positions, encouraging the exploration of options and bringing a fresh perspective to the bargaining table.)

These questions are more demanding of a candidate than qualification questions.

What Is a Work Sample?

A work sample is an exercise requiring the applicant to perform tasks that represent the actual work performed on a particular job. In fact, they have been described as "miniature replicas of on the job behavior" (Douglas, ibid., pp. 5-1—5-43). Work samples are actually simulations of an essential part of the job. The concept is similar to the parking test that must be passed to obtain a driver's license.

Developed in the 1920s,work samples are a relatively new idea and have been growing in use as a selection method over the past thirty years. By closely simulating a job and measuring the candidate's performance on the simulation, employers are able to increase their ability to predict the candidate's future job performance, according to Douglas (pp. 5-2—5-7).

When and Why Use Work Samples?
It is appropriate to use work samples when actual demonstration of a skill or ability is more relevant than an interview question. For example, it may be valid to ask an applicant, "How fast can you type?" but it is more reliable to give the applicant a typing test. Or, for a job requiring public speaking skills, such as a Training Officer, an interviewer could ask, "Do you have public speaking ability?" However, it is more appropriate to have the candidate

Actually demonstrate public speaking ability, perhaps by preparing and presenting an actual ten (10) minute training class on a subject of the candidate's choosing.

Work samples are primarily used in such areas as accounting, computer programming, and office/clerical work. They may also be used to test for labor and trade skills, such as carpentry, or working with heavy equipment and/or machinery.

If practical and convenient, job-related equipment (e.g., word processor for typing test) may be used to test for job-related skills. However, it is also acceptable to use simulated equipment, especially if equipment is not readily available, easily damaged, or expensive or dangerous to use. When the work simulation requires the use of equipment, always follow safety procedures and take precautions to protect applicants from injury.

How Are Work Samples Developed?

Work samples are usually not difficult to develop. As with all interview questions, they must be based only on essential KSAs.

Here are a few examples of potential work sample tests:
Performance tests

- Typing tests
- Checking a set of calculations
- Oral presentation
- Skilled trade (e.g., Carpenter Test)

Simulation

- Role play response to a compliant or hostile person
- Phone call test receptionist
- Demonstrate use of actual or simulated equipment
- In-basked exercise—write a letter or memo

Identification/Explanation

- Tools
- Equipment
- Repair procedures and processes
- Inspecting physical plant

Advantages of Using Work Samples

As a selection method, work samples are well-accepted by both employers and job candidates. Douglas (ibid., pp. 5-7—5-9) lists several advantage of using work samples:

> High content validity is the first advantage. Work samples have a direct and logical relationship to job

Behavior, providing job candidates with an idea of their potential suitability for a job.

Second, work samples are accurate predictors of job performance. Douglas explains, "It is difficult for a job applicant to 'fake' job proficiency on a work sample. This means that work sample tests are generally more valid that other types of employment selection devices."

Absence of adverse impact is the third advantage Douglas lists. "Work samples are not subject to court challenges," and, "they conform easily to EEOC standards for test fairness and adverse impact." According to Douglas, "Some minority groups have, historically, not done well on pen and paper aptitude tests." However, "studies have shown that the validity for both white an nonwhite job applicants was greater using a well-constructed work sample test based on a thorough job analysis rather than commercially available mental ability tests." The benefit of using work samples, as these studies show, is that they are better predicators of job success than mental ability tests and do not have significant adverse impact on minority groups.

Fourth, explains Douglas, work samples are well accepted gy job applicants. Applicants "perceive work samples are less difficult, fairer, and of better quality than written tests. Applicants are jore motivated when they understand that the tasks they are being asked to perform relate to the job and provide a fair method of assessing job success." Further, "work sample tests allow job applicants to assess their own chances of job success," because "it is usually immediately obvious to applicants whether they are capable of performing assigned physical tasks." Employees who are more likely to accept and be happy with their jobs are those who believe they have a good chance of being successful.

The fifth advantage cited by Douglas is that work samples are highly accepted by both supervisors and managers as well as employees. As Douglas explains, developing work samples requires supervisors "to scrutinize the job-relatedness of the tasks being tested" As a result, supervisors can feel confident when selecting job candidates based on the outcome of work sample tests.

Reduced turnover is the sixth advantage of using wok samples. "Studies indicate that turnover rates may be reduced by using work samples tests to select job applicants," explains Douglas. Further, reduced turnover rates may result in substantial savings for employers.

Disadvantages of Using Work Samples

While there are many advantages of using work samples, employers also need to be aware that work samples may not be a practical selection device because they may be difficult, costly and time- consuming to administer, advises Douglas (pp. 5-9—5-10). In addition, work sample tests also have selection limitations because they usually involve working with equipment. "Sometimes it is difficult to develop a work sample to assess how a job candidate will work with people," explains Douglas.

In conclusion, work samples tend to measure only acquired skills and are best utilized for selecting employees who already possess needed job skills rather than measuring a candidate's aptitude for a particular job. According to Douglas, "work samples measure levels of previously attained job skills, not the candidate's potential to do a job." For this reason, they do not work well in entry level jobs. Also, only measuring acquired skills can be a particular problem for minorities or women, where these groups have traditionally been denied access to the jobs or training by which they would have learned the skill being tested.

Who Develops Work Samples?

Work samples may be developed by Subject Matter Experts, and always with assistance from their agency's Human Resources Department. The interview developer must decide when a work sample should be performed within the context to the interview meeting session. Here are a few practical guidelines for using work samples:

- Document development of the work sample—Just as the structured interview process is documented, the work sample development process must also be documented.

- Document the candidate's performance—There must be no question that each candidate's performance is objectively evaluated.

- Administer Work Sample consistently—Testing conditions need to be standardized. Work samples must be administered with no deviation of testing conditions.

- Provide written instructions—Whenever possible and practical, provide candidate with written instructions for taking the work sample test. Written instructions also serve as a record of what was stated to the job candidate.

The same guidelines for developing and implementing written tests and structured interviews apply to work sample development and administration. In summary, work samples are structured representations of the actual work to be performed.

THINKING EXERCISES

Thinking exercises may require the candidate to solve a problem, describe a process, or respond to specific KSA related inquiries. This category includes Situational and Behavioral Questions. Let's discuss Situational Questions first.

What Is a Situational Question?

Situational Questions are also called "what if?" and "critical thinking questions." Situational questions describe a problem job situation and ask the candidate how they would handle it. For example:

What if you had to _____? How would you carry out this assignment?

When Are Situational Questions Used?

Design and ask situational questions when you want to evaluate the candidate's ability to analyze, diagnose, or solve problem situations.

Situational questions are used only to assess KSAs needed upon entry into the position. KSAs learned on the job should not be assessed.

Why Use Situational Question?

Situational Questions focus on how tasks related to KSAs are carried out in the job. They are written from typical situations that might confront an employee in the position to be filled. What people say they will do is usually a good indicator of what they will actually do. Therefore, what candidates say they will do is assumed to be a good prediction of their job performance.

How Are Situational Questions Used?

The candidate listens as the interviewer describes a hypothetical problem found on the job. The interviewer then asks what the candidate would do in such a situation and may ask for a solution, a list of possible options, or for the process and steps candidate would use in approaching and solving the problem.

The workplace provides a variety of possibilities for situational questions, as shown in the following list of sample questions from the State of Minnesota's "Selection Interviewing Workshop," p. 36 (Department of Employee Relations, Training and Development Division, 1989).

The interviewer may ask the applicant to :

--critique or evaluate something (a program, policy, procedure, a report's recommendations/conclusions, decision, viewpoint)

--solve a problem (i.e., require the candidate to define the problem, identify its cause, information needed, identify and evaluate possible solutions, decide what to do, and outline an implementation plan)

--apply a set of rules/criteria to a particular case

--lay out a plan (steps) for conducting a study, researching an issue or reaching a goal

--read and explain, rephrase or interpret a statement of policy, procedure, and so on (e.g., give applicants written material either before or during the interview and ask questions to test their comprehension or ability to explain it to clients)

--answer questions to demonstrate knowledge of a particular field

--prioritize a number of issues/problems/activities

--solve a supervisory problem (e.g., hypothetical problem concerning planning, organizing, assigning, directing, motivating, and/or evaluating the work of others)

Define Scope of Inquiry

Sometimes the KSAs identified by the job analysis process do not flow easily into situational questions. Job analysis information gives a broad frame of reference for phrasing questions but more specific, detailed information about incumbent job behaviors is often needed. For example, an important KSA may be "Interpersonal Skills," defined as "showing understanding, courtesy, friendliness, tact, empathy, cooperation, concern and politeness to others; relating well to different people from varied backgrounds an different situations." To develop an effective interview question, a more explicit definition of the KSA is needed: "Listen while people explain their needs," or "Greets people pleasantly and politely." Note how these statements are based on observable job behavior—they reflect how corresponding duties and KSAs are performed on the job. Questions may then flow from these KSA-defining statements.

For example, this situation may occur in an employment office:

An applicant walks up to your desk. He claims he applied for a job about four weeks ago but he hasn't received any notification on the status of his application. He says he'll wait while you check on it. You know that your office maintains records of all applications it receives and processes. How would you handle this situation?

As previously mentioned, situational questions are also called "critical thinking questions." Here is an example of a critical thinking question for an Administrative Assistant:

A woman walks up to your desk and identifies herself as the Human Resource Director at Workforce Development. She wants to speak to your Division Director—she says she has tried to call her four times, but the phone calls have not been returned. She happened to be in the neighborhood, so she thought she would drop by to see the Division Director in person. She does not have an

> appointment. You know that your Division Director is leaving for a meeting with the agency head in ten minutes. What would you do?

Ideally, the interview developer should know of at least one excellent response the candidate might give. Do not use situations or problems that have no solution. Remember, most situational questions will require a range of likely responses to accompany the rating scale.

Realistic Questions Produce Realistic Answers

Situational questions may be prepared either by interview panel members or by an interview developer with panel review. In writing situational questions, it is important to consider that asking someone what he or she might do in a give situation and then evaluating the person's response departs somewhat from real life.

There is not way of knowing what the applicant would do in an actual job situation; however, the premise is that the applicant would behave the same. Interviews should be constructed to minimize the degree of error in this assumption by making the hypothetical questions and sample responses as realistic as possible.

Although the situational questions are of a hypothetical nature, questions should be constructed and answers evaluated in terms of specific work behaviors as defined in the job analysis. In using "what if" questions, you are looking for documentable evidence of critical KSA-related behaviors leading to success in the occupation. Remember, questions need to be short and to the point Use job-related language, not jargon, and avoid regional expressions and obscure technical terms.

SMEs Are Effective Technical Advisors

Situational questions should be written from typical situations that an employee may face in the position to be filled. SMEs are critical in providing questions and very helpful in providing information that will make questions realistic and accurate in detail. The interview developer should be aware of (and document) the KSAs corresponding to a situational question.

Using Situational Questions for Many Different Classifications

Situational questions can be used when interviewing for most positions, and some are general enough (and important and relevant enough) to be used for many different classifications. This example may be used in a structured interview for a Personnel Assistant:

> A man enters your office and begins to loudly criticize the hiring policies of the State of Indiana. He is obviously angry and feels he has been treated unfairly. You know nothing more about his problem—you have never seen him before. How do you handle this situation?

Working well with others is almost a universal job requirement. Here is a question designed to test for this ability:

> You and another employee are working together to complete an assignment, but you do not agree on how to do it. How would you respond in this situation?

Knowing how to handle "people problems" is a primary responsibility in many classifications. A typical problem Training Officers frequently face provides material for a situational question:

> One of your trainees is talking in a low voice to the person seated next to him. You want him to stop. How would you handle this situation?

Sometimes the people with whom a worker must deal are in position of authority. Here is a question from a Division Director interview:

> As Division Director, you would be under the supervision of a Deputy Director. What would be your response if the Deputy Director gave you instructions that you believed to be contrary to the rules and statues of the State?

Some critical thinking questions can involve life or death situations, as in this example from a Correctional Sergeant interview:

> You turn a corner in the cell block and are confronted by an inmate holding a shank (homemade knife) to the throat of another inmate. Behind him a fire in a rag-filled wasted can has been started and is threatening to spread up the wall. The inmate holding the shank yells at you, "Hit the floor!" What would you do?

These examples are based on actual job situations provided by SMEs. SMEs can provide details to help the interviewer create realistic questions. In this example for a Parole Officer, SMEs were consulted as "technical advisors:"

> One of your clients, David Brown, is on probation after pleading guilty to substance abuse for smoking "crack" cocaine. You have learned that, after successfully abstaining from "crack" use for three months, David has had a relapse—two days ago his mother found him smoking "crack" in her basement and informed your office.
>
> How do you think this problem should be addressed and what factors would you consider before making a recommendation or taking action?

Not all problems from the job are good examination problems. Generalized tasks performed equally well by both good and poor performers are not good exam questions. For example, 70% of the incumbents in a job class do calculations, but the poor performers do them as well as the good performers. In fact, the poor performers could be better at doing calculations, while the superior performers are better at explaining them.

Also, candidates form different backgrounds should have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their ability on the structured interview. Questions should not be included that require knowledge of particular procedures unique to your agency or department when candidates who do not know those procedures are equally qualified. There is no need to test for knowledge or skills that will be learned in a brief time on the job (Schultz, Oral Exam Development Manual, Washington State Department of Personnel, Olympia, Washington 1983, p.18).

What Is a Behavioral Question?

Behavioral questions ask "What did you do?" How did you react?" Behavioral questions ask for specific examples of past behavior that relate to the requirements of the job.

How Are Behavioral Questions Developed?

Dessler (Personnel/Human Resource Management, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, Fifth Ed., 1987, p. 233) recommends a four step process for developing behavioral questions:

1. Develop behavioral specifications for the job.
2. Determine what basic factors to probe for.
3. Use an interview plan.
4. Match the candidate to the job.

Behavioral Specifications

Behavioral specifications are based on job analysis and ask, "what kind of person is best for this job?" These behaviors, or traits, can be classified into four basic types:

- knowledge and experience

  -- What must the candidate know about to perform the job?

  -- What experience is absolutely necessary to perform the job?

- motivation

  -- What are the candidates likes and dislikes?
  Goals? Energy level?

- intellectual capacity

  -- Are any special aptitudes required to perform the job, such as mathematical or mechanical ability?

-- What types of problems are encountered on the job? How do these problems need to be solved—cautiously, deductively?

- personality strengths and limitations

  -- What are the critical personality qualities needed for job success? (Ability to withstand boredom, decisiveness, stability, etc.)

  -- Can the job candidate handle stress, pressure, criticism?

  -- What kind of interpersonal behavior is required? Does the job candidate have the ability to work well with others, work well with the public, subordinates, people outside the agency?

Specific Factors to Probe for in the Interview

A combination of open-ended questions can be used to determine the candidate's job suitability:

- Intellectual factors
  Ask about such things as complexity of tasks the candidate has performed, grades in school, and how the candidate organizes thoughts and communicates. Some of these questions may include:

  -- Describe your education for me.

  -- Why did you pick your major?

  -- What was your class standing?

  -- What were your activities?

  -- What honors did you earn?

  -- What were your average grades?

  -- Did your grades adequately reflect your full capability? Why or Why not?

  -- What courses did you like best/least and why?

  -- Have you had any special training for this job?

- Motivation factor

  Probe for candidate's like and dislikes, goals, and energy level, perhaps by asking, "What do you do on a typical Tuesday?" Here are some examples of other questions to test for this factor:

-- Is your present employer aware of your interest in a job change?

-- Why do you want to change jobs?

-- What caused you to enter your job field?

-- Why are you leaving military service at this point?

-- What would you like to be doing five years from now? When you retire?

-- What is the ideal job for you?

-- If you had complete freedom of choice to be a great success in any job field, which would you choose? Why?

- Personality factor

  -- Try to observe the candidate's behavior in the interview—Does she or he appear shy? outgoing? personable? Is the candidate displaying self-defeating patterns of behavior, such as aggressiveness, compulsive fidgeting, and so on? Ask about past interpersonal relations and past interactions (working in a group at school or the in the last job, etc.) The interviewer also needs to be aware of any cultural factors that may influence behavior and/or personality.

Use an Interview Plan

Dessler suggests, "while you are going to be probing for four classes of information—intellectual, motivation, personality, and knowledge and experience—you should devise and use an interview plan to guide the interview" (ibid., p.234). You may want to include significant topics such as:

- High school
- College
- Work experience—both full and part time, such as summer jobs
- Goals and ambitions
- Reactions to the job you are interviewing for
- Self-assessments-the candidate's assessments of his or her strengths and weakness
- Military experiences
- Present outside activities effectively.

As you begin with an open-ended question for each topic, such as, "Could you tell me about what you did when you were in high school?" you can accumulate information on each of the four traits—intellectual, motivation, personality, knowledge and experience.

When Are Behavioral Questions Used?

It is best to use behavior questions when you want to assess a candidate's knowledge, skills, judgement and experience in a variety of situations. As with situational questions, behavioral questions are also flexible and can be used for a wide range of KSAs.

Why use Behavioral Questions?

The assumption is the past behavior is a good predictor of future job performance.

How Are Behavioral Questions Used?

Behavioral questions ask how the applicant has actually responded to a specific situation in previous jobs. In this type of question, the interviewer may begin by asking the applicant to "talk about a specific instance in which you reacted to . . . exactly what did you do/what did you say/how did you behave?"

Here is an example of a multi-part behavioral question designed for interviewing candidates for a nursing job:

> All jobs have some unpleasant tasks that are boring or physically uncomfortable. Can you recall the most unpleasant task you were asked to do at the hospital?
>
> Specifically:
>
> -- What was the task?
>
> -- Who requested that you do the task?
>
> -- How often were you required to do the task?
>
> -- What was your response to the request?

The Final Step—Matching the Candidate to the Job

The final step in this process is to match the candidate to the job. "If you followed your interview plan and probed for the four factors," as Dessler advises, "you should now be able to summarize the candidate's general strengths and limitations" (ibid., p.235). As a result of the interview, you are now able to draw some conclusions about the candidate's intellect, motivation, personality, and knowledge and experience. The next step, according to Dessler (ibid., p235), is to "compare your conclusions to both the job description (the individual position description) and the list of behavioral specifications." In fact, the behavioral specifications are sued as anchors to evaluate candidates objectively. As a result, you will "have a rational basis for matching the candidate to the job, one based on an analysis of the traits and aptitudes actually required" (ibid., p.235).

Other Types of KSA-Related Questions

The situational question is the most common thinking exercise structured interview item, but other KSA-related inquiries are sometimes appropriate too. For instance, it may be determined that a candidate's job philosophy toward some aspect of the job is important, in which case a question like this one from a structured interview for superintendent/director of a large facility might be appropriate:

> There are currently many recognized styles of management, such as democratic, delegatory, participator, directive, flexible, and so on. How would you describe your own style, and how would you expect this approach to work for you as Superintendent of (name of facility)?
>
> Note to Interviewer: A style currently in favor is a combination of participatory, delegatory, flexible, and directive. Autocratic and democratic are not in favor, but listen to the applicant's rationale and judge it on its own merits.

Developing Ideas for Interview Questions

Ideas for interview questions frequently come up before job analysis is completed. Possible questions can be accumulated right from the beginning of the job analysis process. If an idea for a question comes to mind when the interview developer is obtaining information from an SME, the SME can be consulted at that point in the development process. If the idea is a good one, the interview developer should ask the SME how to phrase the question. However, before such questions are used in the final product, the interview writer must first check the results of the completed job analysis to see if the questions are justified by the data.

Remember only duty, task, KSA, education, training, or experience factors that have value can justify an interview question.

Situational questions, especially, should be clearly expressed and easy for any qualified candidate to understand. Avoid idioms and colloquialisms. Simple and direct wording and correct grammar will help candidates get a uniform understanding of a question. The language of the job usually tells candidates what the interview developer wants them to know, but be careful that it does not put "outside" candidates (i,e., non-state employees from the general public) at a disadvantage. Questions should be composed so that everyone knows what is being asked and what kind of answer is expected. Interview panels are not permitted to prompt candidate, so clear expression and consistent understanding are critical. All structured interview questions should be submitted to SMEs for review. The SMEs can verify whether the structured interview adequately covers the domain of the job (i.e., whether all important elements are examined by the interview, and check to see if questions are appropriate and correctly expressed).

One must ensure that all questions are challenging, because challenging questions result in a wide spread of scores. A wide spread is necessary for reliability and validity of the test. Reliability if the test's consistency in ranking candidates. Validity is the degree to

which test results relate to job performance or the degree to which future job performance can be predicted from test results. Questions should be selected that the well-qualified candidates will answer very well and the poorest candidates will not. The difference in answers should be due to the elements being measured and not due to general intelligence. Intelligence people who have little aptitude for the particular job should not be able to answer the question well.

Questions should elicit a wide range of answers from candidates. This means that the best candidate's answer should be much better than the average candidate's answer. The interviewer must be able to distinguish between superior, average, and poorly qualified candidates to make an effective hiring decision. Suppose the interviewer desires to know how well candidates would handle discipline problems. A disciplinary problem can be devised that candidates must resolve by describing the various steps necessary. For instance, the best answers may discuss such things as training and stating assignments clearly. Average answers may outline the steps in the supervisory handbook. A poor answer may mention just one possible solution.

Phrasing Questions

A poor question might be, "What is the strongest action a supervisor could take in such and such a case?" This question does not elicit a full range of responses. Its "correct" answer may be the poor answer described for the question we were just discussing. A better question would be "What would your options be for handling the situation? Which one would you select and why?" A good candidate should apply information, not merely recite generalizations.

Variations of Familiar Themes

Many questions are variations of familiar themes. One such theme is "How do you supervise when a worker's performance falls below normal?" Experienced candidates have been rehearsing answers to these questions for years. Questions should be framed in such a way that the candidates must respond to the particular situation, and a "canned" answer will not be satisfactory.

A question for a Parole Officer classification might involve " the ability to deal effectively with people who are angry." It is useless to ask, "How would you react if confronted by an angry parolee?" Candidates could simply answer, "I would react calmly and reasonably, of course!" Such an answer does not really measure job-related behavior. One still does not know how the candidate would react on the job, because the question did not create a realistic job situation that would call for a definite response. **A vague question elicits a vague answer.**

Instead, define a situation in which an officer deals with angry parolee. Where does the confrontation occur? Who is the parolee? Why is the parolee angry? How angry is the parolee? How great is the danger? The scene must be se vividly:

> Mr. Reed is a parolee who served four years in prison for series of knife assaults. He was released a year ago, but has made a poor adjustment to parole. You have gone to his home to tell Mr. Reed that you must recommend that the parole board revoke his parole and to discuss several additional matters. He jumps up and begins shouting and cursing at you. What would you do now?

This degree of explicitness gives candidates a consistent image of the situation. The question will affect the candidates uniformly. Candidates answers will not depend upon how they happen to interpret the question. Instead, the range of their answers will be rooted in how well they would respond in such a situation. A good answer will include awareness of the physical danger and an attempt to defuse the problem.

In the foregoing example, Mr. Reed should not be allowed to come between the parole officer and the exit. The parole officer should remain calm and try to calm Mr. Reed. If he cannot be calmed, the parole officer should plan to discuss the additional matters at another time.

Examples of Interview Question Development

To measure the KSA "ability to discipline employees" the interviewer must first narrow the scope to the inquiry. The disciplinary problem could be misconduct, poor execution of procedures, or annoying behavior. In this example, the interviewer chooses the problem of low production rates, attempting to measure supervisory skills:

> How would you discipline an employee whose work production is below average?

However, this question is so general that the candidate can define it to fit a well-rehearsed answer. If the candidate does not have an answer rehearsed, the question will still elicit a textbook answer.

Possible answers to the about questions may vary from "ignore the problem" to "fire the employee on the spot," depending on the situation. The interviewer must structure questions to control factors that determine correct answers, rather than letting the candidate do it.

To frame a specific question that will not take a canned answer, a question writer needs to consider the various factors that affect what a supervisor would do. Some factors surrounding the problem have a direct bearing on the action that should be taken:

- Consequences of the problem
- Number of occurrences for this employee
- Previous actions on this problem
- The employee's general performance
- Duration of supervisory relationship
- Employee's attitude
- Employee's response to criticism

- Official rules or policies
- Past practice
- Other people involved

Other factors may also be considered, such as the employee's seniority, the employee's outside responsibilities, and so on. These should not affect the outcome of the corrective action, but they may affect the way the problem should be approached. It will also be helpful to specify the steps that need to be taken in disciplinary action and the common errors that supervisors make. Once listed, the various issues can be put together in different combinations to come up with a large supply of fresh examination questions.

The interviewer may probe for the ability to implement effective discipline by posing specific questions about supervisory problems. A candidate who has effective supervisory skills may approach such problems by taking the following actions:

- Getting the facts
- Defining the problem
- Assessing the damage
- Discussing the problem privately with employee
- Clarifying what is expected
- Taking formal disciplinary action according to established policy, if needed

On the other hand, a candidate's responses indicating the following behaviors may reflect inability to supervise effectively:

- Denying or avoiding acknowledgment of the problem
- Waiting for the problem to reoccur
- Assuming restrictions prohibit discipline
- Start building a case for firing
- Jumping to unwarranted conclusions
- Failing to communicate with employee
- Taking unwarranted action
- Taking a one-sided approach to the problem
- Failing to obtain management support
- Getting angry or frustrated
- Failing to follow established discipline policy (according to Employee Relations guidelines)

The writer is now prepared to develop an improved version of the poorly planned previous example, "How would you discipline an employee whose work production below average?" Now that the parameters have been specified, it is time to derive several questions from it that include significant variations. The following questions are restatements in more specific terms of the original question. There are but a few of the vast number of possibilities:

- You have supervised Molly Peters for two years. She took an immediate dislike to you and you have never been on friendly terms. Her work has always been outstanding. Your supervisor has commended her for outstanding performance. Three days ago she told you in front of other employees that your instructions for a project were against agency policy and counterproductive. You called her into your office and showed her that the instructions conformed to a directive from your supervisor and explained the rationale. She was visibly upset, but did not argue with you. Since then her work production has fallen to half her usual amount, but she is still doing as much as some of your other staff members. How would you handle this situation?

- Julie Nelson is an energetic and popular person who has been with your section for four years. Her work had always been good and she is called upon by coworkers to help the solve technical problems. Lately, her mother has become gravely ill and Julie is quite worried about her. For the last two weeks her work production has fallen to half the usual amount. How would you handle this situation?

- Two months ago you took over as section supervisor. Floyd Martin has worked in that section for two years. The records show that his work performance has generally been quite good, but every three or four months he will have a week or two in which he gets practically nothing doe and what he does do is done poorly. His work has been fine for the last tow months, but yesterday it dropped way off. What do you do about this situation?

- Lou Barrett, the nephew of your agency director, has been working under your supervision for two years. He is reasonably competent but doesn't do any more work that he has to. Recently, you saw Lou doing some freelance work on state time. You called him into the office to discuss the matter. He tells you that he completes all of the assignment that you give him and is doing the other work when he is finished. How would you handle this situation?

Here are two more typical supervisory problems. Each case states a simple textbook question and then shows two ways the question could be made more specific.

Question #1:

How would you go about taking over the duties of a supervisory position?

This question could be written more effectively in either or the following ways:

- Don Jackson has been acting supervisor of an office for several months. The staff liked Don and expected him to be named permanent supervisor. Instead, you were promoted from another office to the position. The staff does not accept you as the supervisor and continues to go to Don for instruction. The quality of work had remained high. How would you handle this situation?

- Martha Pearl has been acting supervisor of an office for several months. The staff liked Martha and expected her to be named permanent supervisor. The staff accepts you as supervisor but continues to go to Martha for answers to technical problems. As a result, you are not aware of all the technical problems that come up. Productivity level is sagging. How would you handle this situation?

Question #2:

How would you go about getting subordinates to accept a new program?

This question could be written more effectively as:

- Assume that you supervise Unit #2 that takes designs from Unit #1, assembles material and passes it on to the Production Unit. Your staff does its part effectively. A central office review team has developed a new procedure that affects all three units. The new procedure is supposed to be more efficient and give better results. The unit's new procedure requires reorganizing the duties of your unit's positions and some retraining. Your staff is not happy about the changes. What would you do concerning implementation of the new procedure?

or as:

- Assume that the unit you supervise receives work from the Design Unit, assemble material and sends on to the Production Unit. Your unit does its part effectively. The supervisor over all three units has developed a new procedure that affects all three units. The procedure makes it possible to increase production by 25%. Using the new procedure, your unit is able to handle more material in the same amount of time. Your staff complains that, under the new procedure, the work will be more monotonous and that they will be doing more work for the same pay. How would you handle the situation?

One could easily think of more versions of any of these questions. Considering potential answers to such questions will help improve the questions in several ways. It will be apparent if the question is stated specifically enough so the candidate can see what is needed. More importantly, it will be apparent if one can expect a range of answers that will discriminate between the more and the less qualified candidates. (Schultz, ibid,. pp.17-30)

<u>Supplemental Questions/Comments</u>

Generally, asking follow-up questions is not recommended because they may prompt an applicant's answer. However, some interview questions require supplemental information. Remember the question about general educational qualifications for the Accountant position?

How has your educational background prepared for a position as an Accountant?

A "follow-up," or supplemental question may be needed for more specific information:

> This position requires an individual who can work with Lotus 1-2-3. How has your education (or experience) prepared you for such duties?

The purpose of a supplementary question is to clarify or seek more information—not to lead the candidate toward a specific answer. Devising supplementary questions is done as part of planning the interview process. Supplemental questions are pre-determined, pre-planned, and written down as part of a corresponding situational or behavioral question. Supplemental questions are then used when candidates give incomplete or non-specific answers to your questions, and more complete and accurate information is needed.

Just as any other interview question, supplemental questions must be carefully planned and worded. If done poorly, supplemental questions might unfairly encourage some candidates to add or change answers, and some candidates may not be asked supplemental questions. **Be sure to ask all applicants the same questions and record their answers.** It should be noted when candidates supply information before the supplemental question is asked. In the previous example, the Accountant candidate may volunteer information indicating experience working with Lotus 1-2-3.

Rather than prompting a candidate, it is best to have several standard questions to use if a candidate's answer seems incomplete or confusing. For example, if the candidate answers only half of a two-part question. . . repeat the question. If a candidate's answer is unclear. . . you might say, "*Please tell us more about that*," or "*Please elaborate*."

If you are part of a selection panel, the person asking the original question might be designated as the one responsible for deciding to ask for clarification.

<u>Final open-ended question</u>

Include an open-ended question toward the end of the interview:

> "Is there anything else you want to tell me (us) about your qualifications?"

Document and evaluate that answers, just like other interview questions. This question is recommended to allow candidates every opportunity to tell interviewers about important qualifications. Sometimes applicants feel they do not get this chance because of the structure of the interview.

<u>Evaluating Answers</u>

The generation of good and bad potential answers and assigning their values is among the topics of a later chapter entitled "Scaling".

First, though, we will consider the source of many of the very best thinking exercise—the critical incident.

CRITICAL INCIDENT

The Critical Incident Method

Situational questions, constituting the major portion of many structured interviews, particularly for professional, supervisory, and some especially sensitive positions, are most credibly developed through the use of the "critical incident method." Originally described by J.C. Flanagan (The Critical Incident Method, 1954), the "critical incident method" is a procedure for developing questions for KSAs. This method entails presenting SMEs with KSAs and asking them to write "critical incidents" that demonstrate each KSA. The SMEs are asked to write behavioral examples to show how the possession or absence of particular KSA may have consequences for the job.

Critical incidents are a type of response given when asked about the competence of an individual in a particular area of job performance. For example, when asked how good an attorney is in "speaking," the response could be a description of something the attorney did during a trial or a recurring behavior during trials. A typical approach would be to ask the assembled group of SMEs to describe things that happened on the job that show how effective or ineffective someone is in a particular aspect of work. The following example of an effective critical incident illustrates how the KSA "Interpersonal Skills" might be described:

> A contract specialist opened proposal negotiations by thanking the contractor for submitting the proposal. The contract specialist then commented on how well the proposal was prepared and how pleased she was to have all the supporting backup included. The contract specialist had not negotiated with the contractor previously, but her opening comments set the tone for a favorable negotiating session.

The SBO Formula

The example of the contract specialist can be checked for completeness through the SBO formula. SBO stands for Situation, Behavior and Outcome, and is useful in constructing critical incidents as well as checking for completeness. Although not in SBO order, the example of a contract specialist critical incident does indeed contain all the required SBO components:

> Situation (leading up to the behavior): A contract negotiator had not previously negotiated with a contractor with whom she was scheduled to meet.

Behavior (of the worker): She opened proposal negotiations by thanking the contractor for submitting the proposal and commented on how well the proposal was prepared and how pleased she was to have all the supporting backup included.

Outcome (of the worker behavior): It set the tone for a favorable negotiating session.

To use SBO as an aid to writing critical incidents, and in explaining to SMEs how to write critical incidents, the natural an logical SBO sequence is the most helpful. Though situational questions are more prevalent in interviews for administrative and supervisory positions, they can and should be used at any occupational level for which they would be appropriate and useful.

Here are two critical incidents, one positive and one negative, for a Clerk Typist position. Note how each is constructed according to the SBO formula:

Positive:

S The Clerk Typist was given two structured interviews to be typed as soon as possible.
B She immediately checked to see which structured interview was scheduled to be administered first.
O As a result of her planning and organization, both examinations were completed on time.

Negative:

S The Clerk Typist placed all incoming assignments on the stack in her "in box."
B Each time she began a new assignment, she would take it from the top of the stack.
O As a result of this practice, the last assignments received were the first ones completed, while earlier assignments remained uncompleted at the bottom of the stack.

Gathering Critical Incidents

In developing critical incidents, it will be necessary to write at least twice as many incidents as the number of questions that will prepared. This is necessary because not all critical incidents will lead to a usable question and some critical incidents may overlap or need to be combined. For example, if an interview containing six questions is planned, one should attempt to generate at least 12 critical incidents, which include examples of both effective and ineffective behaviors. SMEs should be provided with examples of critical incidents to assist them in visualizing the task.

Special forms may be provided to the SMEs to facilitate incident writing. These forms may be generic or may be directed toward a particular KSA such as decision making. See Appendix B for examples of forms that can be used for writing critical incidents describing effective and ineffective behavior.

The following list summarizes the steps to be followed in developing questions from critical incidents:

1. Assemble a small group of 4-5 SMEs who have had the opportunity to perform the job or to observe individuals performing the job. Have the SMEs review the KSAs to be assessed by the interviewee and the job tasks associated with the KSAs. Then ask the SMEs to describe, in writing a group of effective and ineffective behaviors that they have observed which reflect the KSAs and associated tasks. Give the SMEs the forms to take with them and allow them time to complete the forms.

2. Arrange for an independent group of reviewers who are familiar with the job to review the KSAs, associated job tasks, and the critical incidents developed in the previous steps. Ask the group to read each incident and sort it into the KSA category they believe the incident best illustrates. Incidents that are allocated to different KSAs by a relatively large percentage of the judges are eliminated.

3. Rewrite the incidents retained from step 2 as hypothetical situations that show evidence of an important job related behavior (Review "Examples of Interview Question Development" in the previous chapter). In the interview, after the situation is described, the applicant is asked, "How would you handle this situation?" or "What would you have done in this situation?"

It is important for SEMs to have in mind a particular KSA when they begin to formulate a critical incident. It is also important for the test developer to focus on the KAS when considering sample responses that interviewees might provide in the interview. This is the only way that the answers given in the structured interview can be inferred to indicate the level of quality of future performance.

For example, let's use the KSA: "The ability to deal effectively with people who are angry." For a position as Public Assistance Caseworker, this KSA might be one that would distinguish superior workers. The SMEs would first describe the incidents involving angry clients. Next, they describe the outstanding actions taken by Caseworkers, the results of these actions and why these actions were beneficial. The SMEs then think of examples of a Caseworker doing a very bad job of handling angry clients. They describe how the clients were handled, what happened as a result and why this was not desirable. Both critical incidents are instructive and provide ideas for question and as described later, a range of responses.

A Useful Tool

Critical incidents have provided solid, reliable data to human resources technicians for over forty years; first as a job analysis technique, second a test item writing tool and now as a source for developing structured interviews. They have been the subject of much analysis and many journal articles and are a staple of employee and prospective employee assessment.

This chapter had discussed the venerable critical incident and its application to a modern assessment technique, the structured interview.

The next chapter will discuss that component of the structured interview that differentiates it so effectively from nonstructured interviews: the rating scale.

SCALING

Structured Interviews Have Rating Scales

The attribute that sets the structured interview apart from the traditional employment interview is he presence of a rating scale for virtually every question. Rating scales bring structure to grading of job candidates and a way to quantify their job suitability.

Because some tasks, KSAs, and qualifications are more valuable than others, answers to questions are assigned maximum values relative to the value of the particular KSA or qualification being tested. Scales are devised reflecting those values by indicating the maximum value for the "best possible" or an "excellent" answer, and lesser values for lesser answers. The process for producing this scoring system is called scaling and weighing.

Rating Levels

The scales used for individual questions can vary as to the number of rating levels. Selecting an appropriate number of rating levels depends on the value assigned to the question (i.e., to the task, KSA or qualification for which it tests) and, more importantly, the range of possible or likely answers. The range of possible or likely answers is important because, in structured interviews, a candidate's answers are compared to preset criteria (sample answers) to assist the rater in evaluating the candidate's answer. If there are only a few relevant possible or likely answers, this naturally limits the range of he preset criteria.

However, if the range of answers is infinite, the interview developer has considerable discretion in choosing the number of rating levels. A complete, weighted scale might resemble the following qualifications question for a Training Director 1/2HC1 regarding supervisory experience:

SCORE	ANCHOR	PRESET CRITERIA
16	Very Good	At least 2 years experience supervising professional staff in field of training and development.
12	Good	At least 1 year (same as above).
8	Average	At least 1 year supervising professional staff in other areas.
4	Barely Acceptable	Any supervisory experience (two weeks minimum)

0	Not Acceptable	No substantial supervisory experience (less than two weeks)

This rating scale has five rating levels, but the number of rating levels that may be employed is flexible.

Anchors

The labels "very good," "good," etc., are called anchors. Anchors are descriptors of what rankings at the individual levels signify in terms of the quality of responses.

Preset Criteria

The sample answers at the right of the scale are the preset criteria—likely answers placed at the point on the scale where they should be rated. The numbers at the left of the scale are the numerical values for ratings at the various levels.

For these rating scales to be truly effective in adding objectivity to the rating process, and to provide a useful guide for the rater, the various components cannot be the product of subjective decisions by those unfamiliar with the job. The interview developer must use justification from the job analysis to produce the rating scales and/or the rating scales must be the product of consensus by SMEs during or after job analysis. Generally, the interview developer will generate the scales for the SMEs to verify or refine.

The rest of this chapter is devoted to the varieties of recommended rating scales and how they can be developed from data provided by SMEs.

Rating Scale Components

The two most important components of a rating scale are the point values and the present criteria. Both require considerable SME input and careful consideration by the interview developer. Only one is usually relevant to the number of rating levels to be employed by the scale.

Two of the best multi-level scales are the three-level and five-level scales. They both suggest familiar and easily understood anchors:

SCORE	ANCHOR
2	Good
1	Average
0	Unacceptable

SCORE	ANCHOR
4	Very Good
3	Good
2	Average
1	Poor
0	Unacceptable

In fact, the five-level scale corresponds to the A-B-C-D-F grading system used by most elementary and secondary schools. Any number of rating levels that can be justified may be used, but those with more than five require finer discriminations between levels of performance than may be practical. Besides the three-level and five-level scales, the two-level scale is the most frequently used.

Although the scores in the previous examples are in one-point increments, they need not be. For instance, the three-level scale could be scored like this:

SCORE	ANCHOR
3	Good
1	Average
0	Unacceptable

How can a "good" answer be worth three times as much as an "average" answer? If the SMEs say so. Actually, the scoring is based on the SMEs' estimation of the value of he preset criteria, or sample answers, predicted for the question and placed at appropriate levels on the scale. This three-point scale might be part of the following situational question for a supervisory position:

You notice that one of the employees under your supervision has made a careless mistake in an assignment that must be corrected by the employee immediately. How would you handle this situation?

SCORE	ANCHOR	PRESET CRITERIA
3	Good	Supervisor asks employee to come into office, closes door, then informs employee of error.
1	Average	Supervisor tells employee there is a problem, asks employee to come into office to discuss.
0	Unacceptable	Supervisor tells employee "You messed up," reprimanding employee in the presence of co-workers.

In this case, the "good" answer is deemed by the SMEs to be far superior to the "average" answer and is scored accordingly.

Unequal Increments

The scores on the five-level scale need not be in equal increments either. Take, for example, the scale for the Correctional Sergeant interview question from one of the previous chapters.:

> You turn a corner in the cell block and are confronted by an inmate holding a shank (homemade knife) to the throat of another inmate. Behind him a fire in a rag-filled waste can has been started and is threatening to spread up the wall. The inmate holding the shank yells at you, "Hit the floor!" What would you do?

SCORE	ANCHOR	PRESET CRITERIA
9	Very Good	Leaves immediately and reports fire.
7	Good	Tells the prisoner to give up; if he doesn't leaves and reports fire.
4	Average	Tries to reason with the prisoner and tells him that people will get hurt, then leaves to report the fire.
1	Poor	Drops to the floor as ordered, talks to the prisoner, ignores the fire.
0	Unacceptable	Struggles with prisoner for the knife, ignores the fire.

Although the anchors on the rating scales can be supplied by the interview developer, the point values and the present criteria are to be derived from data supplied by SMEs. From the foregoing examples, it should be apparent that the maximum point values assigned to a scale do not normally determine the number rating levels to be used on a scale. In fact, a short scale may have higher point values than a longer scale in the same interview.

Note: A one-point question must have a two-level scale, and a two-point question can have no more than a three-level scale, etc. The number of preset criteria with different levels does affect the number of rating levels, however. The higher the number of typical sample answers that can be ordered into clearly discrete levels on a quality scale, the higher the number of rating levels needed.

Although scales with many levels are sometimes appropriate, most questions will lend themselves easily to two-level, three-level and five-level scales. Logic and/or SME input will determine the number of levels needed.

Generating Preset Criteria

SME input will also determine the preset criteria to be used. To establish preset criteria, Campion and Pursell recommend: "Ask job experts for example answers they have actually heard that subsequently distinguish different levels of on the job performance"

(Latham et al., 1980). A simpler approach is to brainstorm potential answers with experts and personnel representatives familiar with the job and with interviewing comparable candidates. "While developing example answers serves as an evaluation of the questions; difficulty in generating answers suggests that restructuring or elimination of the questions may be warranted." (Campion and Pursell, ibid., pp.28-29).

Preset criteria are "suggested" answers to questions. The purpose of these preset criteria is to provide a frame of reference for assessing the applicant's responses most objectively and consistently. At least one response will be designated as superior, one as satisfactory, and one as unsatisfactory for most questions.

In developing preset criteria, Filed and Gatewood (1989) have recommended that SMEs be asked to think of persons whose performance on the job they would rate as superior, satisfactory or unsatisfactory, and to estimate how these persons would respond to each question. Answers with a high degree of agreement among the SMEs, whether they are superior, satisfactory or unsatisfactory, are retained as preset criteria for the rating scale.

After questions and preset criteria have been developed by the SMEs, written copies of each question are provided to each SME for review, comments and editing. It may be necessary to reconvene the SMEs at least once to go over changes until there is agreement. After SME review and modification, the questions are tested on persons similar to the intended applicants to check for clarity and appropriateness.

The following information shows the progression for job analysis through development of questions and preset criteria for a situational question:

> Example of an interview questions and preset criteria developed from job task, KSA and critical incident information.

Important Job Task:

- Conducting investigations; identifies potential criminality.

Important KSA:

- Integrity/Honesty: Displays high standards of ethical conduct and understands the impact of violating these standards on an organization, self and others; chooses an ethical course of action and is trustworthy.

Interview Questions:

- You are investigating a group of auto dealership managers suspected of money-laundering activities. During the course of an interview with one suspect, the suspect offers to help you buy a car at a price you know is way below market value. What do you do?

Rating Scale

- Unsatisfactory: Accept the offer

- Satisfactory: Say no to the offer and continue the investigation document the incident in your report.

- Superior: (a) Say no to the offer; report the incident to your supervisor or senior agent. (b) Say no to the offer; document the incident promptly.

(Outerbridge, ibid, pp.14-17)

Placement of Preset Criteria

Some qualification questions may indicate entry level KSAs as a possible response. Essential KSA responses are placed as preset criteria at the middle level of the scale. As in the Caseworker example, mentioned earlier (see page 72), the ability to deal with people who are angry is essential. An answer reflecting satisfactory ability is placed at the middle of the scale; an answer reflecting superior ability is rated higher. Likewise, a response reflecting poor ability or inability to deal with angry people is placed at the bottom of the scale. Average, adequate, or acceptable answers for situational questions are also placed as preset criteria at the middle level. Other sample answers are arranged accordingly.

Note: Occasionally, a candidate's answer will not match any of the preset criteria. When this happens, the rater estimates the answer's value compared to that of the preset criteria, with help from the anchors.

Weighting Structured Interview Questions

Determining the number of points to be assigned to questions is a complex process that must be thoroughly documented. It is just as important to the validity of the structured interview as any other aspect of the procedure. Questions should be based on important tasks, qualifications, and KSAs. Assigning point values to questions first requires assigning points to these subjects matter areas.

The process of assigning numerical values to questions is known as "weighting." To accurately weigh questions, the questions should first be categorized under the tasks, KSAs or qualifications for which they test. Using job analysis results as a guide, the interview developer must rank, in order, these subject matter areas from the most valued to the least valued. Job analysis should indicate, or at least imply, the relative value of the subject matter areas to each other, so the interview developer can use this data to distribute rating points among the areas accordingly. Where data is lacking, more SME input should be sought.

After the number of points allotted to each area has been determined, the allotted points for each of the areas are divided among the questions. Once again, job analysis data or

further consultation should be used to justify the distribution of points, and the process should be documented.

Once this weighting has been completed, the points available for each question can be distributed along the question's scale accordingly. Usually, distributing the points evenly, or as evenly as possible, is recommended. Exceptions to even distribution, such as the 3-1-0 distribution for the supervisory question on page 78 should be justified in the documentation.

There's that word again: documentation. People who develop tests, like structured interviews, are aware that their work may be legally challenged as invalid. A "connective thread" must be demonstrated from the job analysis right through the scaling of answers, so that the answers and their point values can be traced back and demonstrated to have a valid basis. The point values are just as critical to the validity of a structured interview as is the job-relatedness of the questions.

Defensibility

Defensibility should be utmost in the mind of the structured interview developer throughout the interview development process. The key elements to defensibility for someone developing a structured interview, or any kind of test, are to do it right and to document it.

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Structured Interviews Are Administered Consistently

The structuring of the interview's administration is just as important as scaling and weighting are in bringing objectivity to the selection interview. Scientifically, this is known as "operational validity" or "controlling the variables." Basically, it means administering the interview consistently to all candidates.

A panel of raters, usually three, is recommended for structured interviews. According to Campion and Pursell, ". . . . a panel reduces the impact of idiosyncratic biases" (quirky, personal prejudices) " that single interviewers might introduce. Further, whenever feasible, it is advisable to use the same raters for all interviews to enhance consistency." (Campion and Pursell, ibid., p.29)

The Interview Environment

All interviews should be conducted at the same location and under similar conditions. Every effort should be made to conduct the interviews in a manner that is as non-stressful for candidates as possible; therefore, the interviews should be conducted privately in a quiet, comfortable environment.

Panel numbers are introduced to each candidate in a friendly manner at the start of each interview. One panel member at a time asks questions, and each panel member asks the same set of questions throughout the interview process. The other panel members may record the candidate's responses. Before the interview, the panel facilitator or senior panel member explains to each candidate that all candidates will be asked the same questions and graded on their answers.

There is no prompting or unplanned follow-up questions, although questions may be repeated. (As part of planning for the interview, several standard questions are developed in case a candidate's answer is incomplete or confusing, e.g., "Please tell me more about that," or "Please elaborate.") Obviously, questions must be crafted for clarity, completeness and lack of ambiguity in order to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding.

Note: A lack of feedback will be stressful to most candidates unless they know beforehand that panel members are required to show no reaction to their responses. Candidates should be informed of this aspect of structured interviewing during preliminary instructions.

Preliminaries/Preparation

Before any applicant enters the interview room, the panel facilitator verifies that:

a) Physical facilities are in proper order (tables, chairs, lights, heating/ventilation, freedom from distracting noises, etc.).

b) Panel interview materials and stationery supplies are at hand.

c) The other panel members and scheduled participants are present on the day of the interview.

The panel facilitator/leader prepares a time schedule for the day, allowing an equal amount of time for each interview.

Panel members should always review list of candidates to determine if any of the applicants are known to the panel and the extent of the relationship. This must be done prior to admission of the applicants to the interview, with panelists all together at once or in consecutive, structured, one on one meetings with coordination of who asks what. If there is any question about the ability of a panel member to make an impartial rating, that person should not take part in the questioning or rating of the applicant. A substitute panelist must be obtained before the interview can proceed.

Before the first interview of the day begins, panel members should allow about 20 minutes to review and discuss interview instructions and procedures. In addition, panel members should discuss procedure and who will be asking what questions during the interview.

When ready, invite the applicant into the interview room.

The Interview Process

Upon arrival, applicants are welcomed and introduced to each panel member. The panel coordinator explains the interviewing process. These comments should be standardized and possibly in writing. The applicant is informed that panel members will be taking notes throughout the interview. Any questions about the process posed by the applicant are answered before the interview begins. Each panel member is provided with a pre-assembled packet, which contains the interview questions, preset criteria, and any necessary forms.

All applicants may be given a copy of the interview questions at the beginning of the interview and asked to read along as a panelist reads each question. Whatever method of question presentation is used, it should be consistent for all applicants. As applicants respond to questions, the panelists should take careful notes. Both the quality and quantity of written information describing the applicant's behavior must be sufficient to document each rating. Questions that prompt or lead a candidate toward a specific answer are not allowed.

Panel members must avoid:

a) Discrediting, either by word or expression, and applicant's response.

b) Answering applicants' questions about the situations.

c) Giving any feed back to applicants, by word or expression, indicating that they did well or poorly.

During the interview, remember that every attempt is made to maintain objectivity and to provide the opportunity for the applicant to do his or her best. Applicants will also be observing the panel members during the interview. They will form impressions of he panel's attitude, competence, fairness and thoroughness. The responsibility for the tone of the interview rests with the panel members; their handling of the applicants will affect the feelings of each applicant about the fairness of the interview.

Closing the Interview

At the end of the interview, the coordinator thanks the applicant, answers any general questions and ensures that all interview materials issued to the applicant are collected. Finally, the applicant is advised not to discuss the individual interview with other applicants and is then excused.

The Structured Interview Packet Format

While the format of the structured interview's setting and its administration has become fairly well standardized in personnel psychology literature (e.g., Campion and Pursell, ibid; Wiesner and Cronshaw, " A meta-analytic investigation of the impact of interview format and degree of structure on the validity of employment interview," Journal of Occupational Psychology, 1988, 61; Daniel and Valencia, "Structured Interviewing Simplified," Public Personnel Management, Vol. 20 No. 2, Summer 1991; et al), a format for the structured interview rater's packet has not. However, you may refer to Appendices C, D, and E for examples of forms which can be adapted for structured interview purposes.

A structured interview cover sheet is recommended for all packets containing space for position, applicant and interview data at the top, standard instructions for an agency's structured interview in the upper half of the page and space for specific interview instructions to panel members in the lower half of the page. See Appendix C.

The general instructions are similar for all of an agency's interviews and may be preprinted on the form.

Here is an example:

> Ask each question, allowing the candidate time for a complete answer. A question may be repeated, but questions that prompt or lead an applicant toward a particular answer are not permitted.
>
> Write the candidate's response in the space provided. Compare the candidate's answer to the preset criteria (sample answers) which accompany each question's rating scale and rate the candidate's answer accordingly. If the candidate's answer is not similar to any of the preset criteria, estimate the response's value according to the rating scale's anchors (i.e., rating level descriptors, e.g,. "average", "good", etc.) Write the point value in the space provided at the bottom of the page.
>
> At the conclusion of the interview, after the candidate has departed, transpose point values from all questions to the scoring sheet at the back of the packet and compute the candidate's final score.

Specific instructions could resemble these:

> After concluding the interview, hand the applicant the writing exercise. Tell him/her that he/she will be placed at a table in a quiet location and allowed 20 minutes to compose a response to the attached letter.
>
> Tell the applicant that the writing sample will be graded based on organization, paragraph structure, sentence structure and grammar, word choice, spelling, punctuation, format, and completeness.

The structured interview packet includes structured interview question sheets. The recommended format will have the question stem at the top and scale with anchors and preset criteria in the middle portion, and a section for recording the applicant's response. A blank at the bottom is used to record to applicant's score as indicated by the rater on the scale. See Appendix D.

<u>The Scoring Sheet</u>

The last page in the packed is the scoring sheet. (An additional blank page is optional.) The scoring sheet sample, Appendix E, is largely blank because the page's content will vary according to the factors being rated. This example might appear on a scoring sheet for a Personnel Technician structured interview:

1. Education _____
2. Experience _____
3. General knowledge of applicable employment laws _____

4.	Deadline/Volume of Work	_____
5.	Communication Skills	_____
6.	Confidentiality	_____
7.	Independent Decision Making	_____
8.	Knowledge of Supervision	_____
9.	Writing Sample	_____
	TOTAL	_____

Although the packet described here has proven useful, it is only a recommended format. Should an agency desire to be creative or innovative in this area, there are no official constraints. Please refer to the "Example of a Structured Interview for a Psychiatric Attendant 5/3CA5," on pages 57-64, for an illustration of how forms may be created for agency use.

As with all matters involving testing, however, please consult with your Human Resources Department whenever departing from this manual's prescribed procedures.

PANEL SELECTION AND TRAINING

Who Serves on an Interview Panel?

An interview committee, or panel, consists of three to five, sometimes six, members. It is preferable to have the SMEs and other employees who participated in the job analysis and interview development serve on the panel. Having at least one panel member who is familiar with the job is beneficial. At any rate, it is imperative that panel members be able to understand the answers to the questions. All panel members need to be SMEs when questions require professional judgement is applying technical knowledge to job-related situations. Otherwise, it is recommended that a panel be made up of the position's supervisor, the position's current incumbent, employees or co-workers in comparable positions, and human resource representatives familiar with the job. When possible, provide a balanced panel by selecting representative numbers of women and minorities. The same panel members are used throughout the interviewing process for a particular job.

Who should Not Be on a Panel?

There is no need for panel members to be at a higher pay range than the job to be filled. If a panel member is a relative, friend, or other personal relation of a candidate, they should disqualify themselves or be excused, because their impartiality may be in doubt.

Panel Preparation

Prior to the interviews, panel members review the position's job duties and requirements. Benchmark job descriptions and individual Position Descriptions are good sources for this purpose, as are summaries of the job analysis. Members should also carefully review the questions and sample answers.

Panel members should be told what is expected of them. They must be willing to conduct the interview as it is designed. They must commit to serve at the required times. Several days before the interviews, if possible, a training session for panel members should be held.

Rater Error, or "Employment Pitfalls"

It is useful to have panel members trained in how to avoid rater error. Some of the most common interview mistakes, as defined by Gary Dessler in his book, Personnel/Human

Resource Management, (Prentice-hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1991, Fifth Edition, pp.218-242) include:

- making snap judgments—Interviewers usually make up their minds about candidates during the first few minutes of the interview. A decision about the applicant too soon in the interview contradicts the purpose of the interview.

- negative emphasis—Unfavorable information influences interviewers more than favorable information. In fact, interviews are often a search for negative information. The earlier negative information is presented in the interview, the greater the effect.

- not knowing the job—Interviewers who are not familiar with the job are often not able to select the most suitable candidates. Conversely, interviewers who are familiar with the job conduct more useful interviews and thus, are able to better judge each candidate's potential.

- pressure to hire-Some positions, such as Correctional Officers, Nurses, and Psychiatric Attendants are critical to the functioning of the agency or facility. When a position is critical, pressure to hire can unduly influence a favorable evaluation of a candidate.

- candidate order error—An average applicant follows a highly qualified applicant in the interview process and is thus rated lower than average. Or an average applicant follows a lesser qualified applicant and so the average applicant is rated higher than average. In this type of error, also called "contrast effect," candidates are compared to each other instead of the job requirements.

- similar to me effect—Candidates who seem to be most like the interviewer are perceived as having greater potential for success than other candidates.

- nonverbal behavior—Emphasis is on physical factors, such as appearance, dress, voice, body language, rather than job-related factors, e,g,. young, attractive candidates are more likely to be hired.

Additional types of rater errors commonly made by interviewers are listed as "Employment Pitfalls' on the following two pages and in Appendix A. Interviewers should at least review the above list of rater errors and their definitions. Understanding these common mistakes is the first step toward avoiding them.

EMPLOYMENT PITFALLS

- **No systematic approach.**

-- Interviewer cannot remember important candidate information after the interview.

-- Interviewer fails to document reason for choosing one person over another.

-- Interviewer's decisions are based on a "gut feeling" only; interviewer possesses overconfidence and a sense of infallibility in evaluation ability; hasty decisions are made.

-- Important information is missed.

-- Job requirements are poorly defined.

- **Interviewer is rushed and unprepared.**

  -- Appropriate job-related questions are not expanded upon or even asked.

  -- Interviewers benefit little from interviewing experience it is not an everyday occurrence.

- **Questions are not job-related.**

  -- Too much time is spent on non-job-related topics.

  -- Interviewer fails to relate facts to on-the-job behaviors.

- **Candidate feels intimidated and poorly treated.**

  -- Interviewer lacks ability to put candidate at ease during interview.

  -- Candidate leaves with a negative impression of the interviewer and the organization.

  -- Questions appear biased or discriminatory; interviewer's language reflects sexism, ageism and/or racism.

- **Gender bias:**

  -- Men are offered higher ranking positions even when ratings are equal between sexes.

  -- Gender bias can occur both ways—particularly where women are doing more hiring.

  -- Females are evaluated more severely when job requirements were deemed demanding.

-- Highly qualified females are rated less suitable than highly qualified males.

-- Among highly competitive applicants, males and younger candidates are preferred.

-- Female raters tend to evaluate applicants of both sexes more positively than male raters.

-- Females are generally given lower evaluations than males even when these candidates have similar or identical qualifications.

Arvey, Richard D., "Unfair Discrimination in the Employment Interview: Legal and Psychological Aspects," Psychological Bulletin, 1979, Vol. 86, pp. 736-765.

Do's and Don'ts

Basic guidelines for clear and effective interviewing can be found in Appendix F. Interviewers may want to review the dos and don'ts of interviewing in preparation of the interview process. During training, panel members need to be cautioned to not discuss the interview with anyone. Likewise, the candidates should also be told to not discuss the interview with others.

Other agency authorities should not attempt to influence the panel. Doing so is a holdover from the days of performing general ratings based on undefined criteria. If the agency representative tells the panel what to look for in a candidate, it will most likely work at cross purposes to the structured interview. The job analysis defines what the structured interview is to measure. The instructions and rating guides tell the panel what to look for. Someone has not been intimately involved in the interview development will only confuse the panel and interfere with the examination process. At a date prior to the structured interviews, panel members should meet to discuss their impressions of the job's requirements. At this time, they should also raise any questions they might have regarding the job or the interview procedure and select a spokesperson/facilitator who will greet the candidates, introduce the panel members, and ask the questions. The facilitator may also be responsible for scheduling applicants for interviews.

Controlling Interview Variables

Controlling the variables is essential for structured interviews, so whenever feasible, candidates should be interviewed by the same people, in the same place, and in the same manner.

Documentation Helps to Control Variables

Taking accurate, factual notes is critical to properly evaluating candidates and making the best hiring decisions. Here is why:

> In a short, 20-minute interview, half the managers could not report accurately on the information produced during the interview! On the other hand, those managers who had been following the interview guide and taking notes were quite accurate.
> Cascio, W. F. (1987) Applied Psychology in Personnel Management, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall. pp. 267-268.

Each panel member must be capable of writing notes that reflect the essential elements of the candidate's answers, and that can be reviewed by the panel members after all interviews are concluded. These notes may also be reviewed by investigators if the interview results are challenged.

Minimizing Discrepancies Between Raters

When all interviews have been concluded, panel members compare their individual scores with one another and note any wide discrepancies. When such discrepancies occur, it is permissible for panel members to compare notes and discuss their reasons for assigning scores. It is usually the case when this occurs that one interviewer is persuaded to alter ratings because of another interviewer's rationale for having rated a candidate differently. Any changes in ratings may be made at this point before scores are officially finalized.

Even though such score revisions may take place hours after an earlier interview, memory decay for candidates' answers is avoided by the extensive note taking of panel members (Campion and Pursell, ibid., p.29.)

Consensus building is considered a benefit of panel ratings because it tends to mitigate the biases of individuals. The advantage of a consensus rating, rather than a calculated arithmetic average, is that it counteracts inequitably high or inequitably low ratings. If one panel member perceives a candidate erroneously, that error is often corrected by other panel members (Daniel and Balencia, ibid., p. 129.) Rules and procedures for reaching consensus should be established by the panel before the interviewing process begins.

After consensus is reached, the entire list of candidates is rank ordered. As a group, the panel should document, or provide a narrative rationale for the ranking of candidates and overall recommendations. This information is particularly crucial if the top ranked candidate is not hired.

Advantages of Panel Interviewing

Panel interviewing decreases the effects of subjective, individual biases. "Panel interviews," according to Daniel and Valencia (ibid., p. 129), "produce better decisions because the process of creating a group consensus frequently mitigates the biases of individuals." Further, research show structured panel interviews to be the most reliable and valid type of interview (Weisner and Cronshaw, ibid.) As few as three people can

serve on a panel, providing a "simple, inexpensive means of improving interview quality" (Daniel and Valencia, ibid., p. 129). It is strongly recommended that agencies use panels in the interviewing process to make effective hiring decisions.

APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES

Equal Opportunity

The State of Indiana is committed to providing equal public employment opportunities to all qualified applicants, including those with disabilities. Recent legislation, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), is a result of a social movement to bring citizens with disabilities in the mainstream of American life. People with disabilities are entitled to a fair chance to compete in the workplace.

Reasonable Accommodation

Ensuring fair treatment sometimes require employers to make adjustments known as reasonable accommodations, both on the job and during employee selection. Reasonable accommodations are no "concession" to people with disabilities. Their purpose is to "level the playing field" so candidates can compete on an equal basis. Structured interview procedures may need to be altered by reasonable accommodations for some (not all) persons with disabilities.

Upon being scheduled for an interview, candidates are given detailed explanation of the interview process and informed of any test that will be administered. At this time, job candidates are also advised of the availability of reasonable accommodations. A candidate must then identify for the agency, in advance, exactly what is needed to be able to participate in the interview and examination process. Agencies should not assume that they can "prepackage" accommodations. Each request for reasonable accommodation must be addressed separately.

NOTE: The ADA Coordinator for each agency should be involved in all decisions concerning what constitutes reasonable accommodation.

Types of Disability

Following are some examples of the types of disabilities and possible accommodations; however, it is important to note that each person is an individual and must therefore be considered on a case by case basis.

> Individuals with Vision Disabilities usually do not require accommodations during a structured interview. However, if the applicant is required to read information during the interview, some form of accommodation will be required.

Accommodations vary according to the candidate's degree of ability, from providing the information in large print to providing a reader. As with all candidates with disabilities, the candidate or, if necessary, the candidate's representative, can provide the best information about what is required.

For Individuals with Hearing Disabilities, the accommodation depends on the degree of disability. Sometimes all that is needed is for the interviewer to sit facing the candidate, speak directly to the candidate, and enunciate clearly. Other individuals can communicate more effectively by passing written messages back and forth.

NOTE: Rate these candidates on their answers' content, not on their writing ability.

If the candidate requires a qualified interpreter to be able to communicate with the panel, the agency should be aware of the process to access the Interpreter Services Program. Interpreters should be arranged for at the earliest opportunity, but no later than 48 hours before needed. To arrange for an interpreter, you will need to contact your local Deaf Community Services, listed in the telephone directory. For further assistance, you may contact the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of Family and Social Services Administration at 317-232-1143 or 1-800-962-8408.

Individuals with Learning Disabilities may have problems understanding complex language, or organizing visual, auditory, and/or other sensory information. Such difficulties may present difficulties regarding the interview, but if reasonable, accommodations must be made to permit the individual to compete for the job. Language difficulties may be addressed by reducing the complexity level of the interview language. Other difficulties can be addressed with help and/or prior notice from the candidate and/or the candidate's representative, and by consulting professionals in learning disabilities at the Indiana Division of Mental Health, Family and Social Services Administration.

Most candidates with Neurological Disabilities will not need accommodations for the oral part of any structured interview as long as the interview's location is accessible. Many persons who are unable to speak use one of several methods of electronically assisted communication. In these instance, the only accommodations might be scheduling additional time necessary to allow for the conversation to take place.

Reasonable accommodations in interviewing and in the workplace are a welcome development to people with disabilities. They deserve a fair chance to compete for the opportunity to make a living and to live as independently as their circumstances allow. In striving to provide reasonable accommodations, one important consideration must not be overlooked: the individual interviewed must understand the structured interview process.

Treating people with disabilities fairly requires forethought. As in all cases, when interviewing, the interviewer must be prepared. If there are questions about what obligations you might have under the ADA, please contact your agency directory. You may also contact the State ADA Coordinator, located within the State Personnel Department, AA/EEO Division.

DOCUMENTATION: PART 2

Criterion Validity

The most logical and direct method of establishing the validity of a test is to use criterion validity, the comparison of test scores to subsequent job performance in the area tested. Unfortunately, this type of validity is usually impractical for employment testing, since most of the individuals tested get no chance to demonstrate their job performance, and those who do are too few in number and their range of scores too small to provide reliable statistical data.

Content Validity

U.S. courts accept content validity as a way for employers to demonstrate their tests' fairness and job-relatedness. Content validity requires demonstration of adherence to prescribed procedures for test development. A test developer must be able to show that each candidate's final score is accurate and meaningful through a demonstration of the following:

- how the score was calculated,
- justification of the system used to calculate the score, an explanation of the weighting of the various elements used to arrive at a total score,
- a rationale for the questions used to obtain the score,
- a description of the job analysis findings from which the questions are derived
- identification of the SMEs who provided the data in the job analysis results.

A structured interview, of course, is a test, and is subject to the foregoing requirements in all its aspects. This requirement is met through documentation, i.e., a "paper trail" that stretches back through the entire process of the interview's development. The purpose of the "paper trail" is to show the connections between each step in the job analysis, interview development, interview panel selection, interview administration, and scoring process. As a result of such documentation, courts of law are permitted to logically infer a valid connection between the substance of a job and the substance of a structured interview developed for the job.

The 1978 Federal Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures state the following:

- Job analysis – Content of the job. A description of the method used to analyze the job should be provided (essential). The work behavior (s), the associated tasks… should be completely described (essential). Measure of . . .importance of he work

behavior(s) and the method of determining these measure should be provided (essential).

- Where the job analysis also identified the knowledge, skills and abilities used in work behavior(s) . . . the relationship between each knowledge, skill, or ability and each work behavior, as well as the method used to determine this relationship, should be provided (essential).

- Selection procedure and its content. Selection procedures, including those constructed by and for the user, (the agency) "specific training requirements, composites of selection procedures, and any other procedure supported by content validity, should be completely and explicitly described."

Clearly, documentation is the key ingredient in the content validation process. A methodical approach is recommended for collecting the needed, but descriptively termed "exhaustive" documentation. The systematic and steady accumulation of data at each state of the interview's development will make the process eventually seem "automatic". It will also reinforce the interview developer's familiarization with the job data throughout the process as the separate stages are completed in producing the selection instrument.

The Interview Log Folder

Documentation should be collected in a folder, in the following order:

1. Job Description Benchmark (Benchmark).

2. Position description (PD)

3. Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)-Names of job incumbents, supervisors, managers, trainers, personnel officers, coworkers (especially those whose work is affected by the position to be filled), and outside experts (e.g., academic sources, etc.) consulted for job analysis and other relevant information, and for their professional opinions and judgments.

4. Note from SME interviews.

5. List of job duties and tasks associated with the position by research and SMEs.

6. List of qualifying education, training, and experience factors associated with the position by research and SMEs.

7. Ratings of frequency and importance for duties, tasks, KSAs, and education, training, and experience factors.

8. The domain of the structured interview, determined by the rating result for important/frequent duties and tasks, important/frequently used KSAs that a candidate should possess before being hired, KSAs that may help an individual to learn the job faster and become productive sooner, and important education, training, and experience factors.

9. A column chart containing the following data:

    a. Number of each interview question.
    b. Task/duty/KSA/education/training/experience factor on which the question is based.
    c. Value rating of the task/duty/KSA education/training/experience factor on which the question is based.
    d. Point-value assigned to the question.

10. A description of the training of the selection panel.

11. Originals or clear copies of the interview booklets used by the panel members to record their notes and ratings.

12. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) information for all candidate.

13. A roster of candidates listed in order of their scores, with an indication of who was selected.

14. Record of any complaints or unexpected occurrences during the interview process

15. A clean copy of the structure interview booklet.

This interview "log folder" must be kept safe and accessible for seven years following any selection for the position(s) to be filled. During this time limit, any candidate interviewed may challenge the interview's validity or adverse impact, i.e., basis against minorities and protected classes. Should such a challenge occur, the burden of proof lies with the hiring agency's ability to provide evidence of job relatedness and no disparate impact.

The key to an agency's defense against such charges is through documentation. Being able to show proper development and administration of structured interviews will diffuse most challenges, and will make those that do reach court very likely to be resolved in the agency's favor

MAKING THE MOST OF THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW AS A SELECTION TOOL

The Quality of Employees Depends on the Quality of Selection Tools

The development and administration of the State of Indiana's structured interviews are processes requiring compliance with established guidelines. Agencies are expected to make reasonable and conscientious efforts to comply, as the totality of circumstances permit. This is because these structured interviews, like all public employment tests, are subject to legal challenge if a candidate perceives the interview to be invalid or unfair. More importantly, the quality of employees selected often depends on the quality of the selection tool.

As explained in the manual, Indiana's employment tests, including structured interviewers, rely on proof of content validity as their defense against legal challenges. Proof of content validity requires meticulous documentation of the developer's use of correct procedures to produce a selection tool that makes sense.

Developing structured interviews despite the strict requirements for legal defensibility, offers great opportunity for creativity and innovation. Developing structured interviews will no doubt become the specialty of certain talented human resources professionals in many agencies. The process of structured interview development is demanding and should never be approached in a half-hearted manner. A second-rate effort will result in a second-rate experience for interview panel members, second-rate public relations with job candidates, and second-rate customer service for the people of Indiana.

Agencies should assign structured interview development to employees who can accept a challenge and who are thorough and well organized. The result will be superior employee selection for the State of Indiana workforce.

For advice on structured interview job analysis, development, or administration, contact your agency's Human Resources Department.

TASKS and KSAs
PSYCHIATRIC ATTENDANT

Tasks and Knowledges, Skills, and Abilities:
Psychiatric Attendant 5 Validation Study, August 1985

TASKS

1. Performs duties for the physical care of residents, e.g., bathing, feeding, dressing and using toilet.
2. Performs duties for the basic medical care of residents, e.g., giving enemas, checking and recording vital signs.
3. Performs basic first aid in case of resident injury, e.g., applying antiseptic, bandages, CPR, and Heimlich maneuver.
4. Trains and assists residents in accomplishing daily living tasks such as eating and personal grooming.
5. Assists in creating and maintaining a safe and healthy environment by performing a variety of housekeeping duties: cleaning equipment, furniture, facilities, and clothing.
6. Documents accurately residents' behavior and any reactions to medication.
7. Recognizes and acts in emergency situations by notifying appropriate staff.
8. Physically aids resident and/or modifies adverse resident behavior.
9. Recognizes won limitations in physically aiding or restraining residents.
10. Contributes observations of resident's behavior to treatment team.
11. Escorts residents to and from other areas of the hospital, entertainment areas and on field trips.
12. Established rapport, converses and socializes with residents, providing psycho-social care.
13. Operates medical equipment such as stethoscope, thermometer, and sphygmomanometer under supervision of Attendant 4, Attendant Supervisor, Licensed Practical Nurse or Registered Nurse.
14. Comprehends and follows oral and written instructions.
15. Provides for safety and security of residents.
16. Follows procedures for suicide prevention, use of restraints, seclusion, and escape precautions.
17. Maintains records, reports, and charts accurately.
18. Leads groups of residents in planning activities.
19. Provides input in treatment/team planning..

KNOWLEDGES, SKILLS and ABLITIES

1. Ability to read and comprehend basic medical instructions for resident care. For applicants with disabilities, this ability could include a "reasonable accommodation," for example, providing readers or interpreters.
2. Practical knowledge of routine nursing care procedures such as bathing, toilet hygiene, feeding, CPR, and first aid techniques.
3. Physical ability to perform a variety of housekeeping duties to ensure the comfort, safety, and well being of residents.
4. Ability to keep records, reports, and charts of residents accurately.
5. Ability to establish and maintain good interpersonal relationships with residents and staff.
6. Ability to follow oral instructions.
7. Ability to follow written instructions.
8. Ability to act in emergency situations requiring physical management and protection of residents.
9. Practical knowledge of a variety of training and treatment techniques used with residents.
10. Knowledge of precautions for avoiding side effects of commonly used drugs.
11. Ability to perform basic mathematical calculations to determine proper dosages of medicine.

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Planning Worksheet

PPSYCHIATRIC ATTENDANT 5

EXAMPLE

Area of Responsibility (AR) and Associated Task Statement (TS)	**"Position Qualification"** **Essential KSA**	**Desirable KSA**	**Desirable "Other Personal Characteristics"**
1. Physical care of residents: bathing, feeding, dressing, using toilet, etc.	1. Knowledge of routine nursing care procedures: toilet hygiene.		Patience. Caring attitude.
2. Performs basic first aid: applies antiseptic, bandages, CPR and Heimlich maneuver.	1. Ability to perform first aid Procedures.	1. Ability to perform CPR. 2. Ability to Perform Heimlich Man.	
3. Keeps residents' records, reports, and charts.	1. Ability to observe and record residents' behavior accurately.	1. Knowledge of medical Terminology.	Attention to detail.

CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE ANCHORS FOR EXAMPLE OF PSYCHIATRIC ATTENDANT 5/3CA5

If you have worked in a direct care facility in the past (Nurse's Aide, Ward Attendant, Home Health Care Worker, Qualified Medications Aide, etc.), what did you like best about the job? what did you not like?

CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE

RATING	POINTS	PRE-SET CRITERIA
EXCELLENT	4	At least 6 months experience. Liked the patients and working with doctors and nurses. Is able to describe a specific experience with a positive outcome, such as helping a patient accomplish a particular goal, etc. Did not like working with other staff who really didn't care about patients, or who mistreated patients. (Always reported mistreatment or took appropriate steps when witnessing patient abuse.)
GOOD	3	At least 3, but less than 6 months experience. Similar to excellent response as above, but less experience.
SATISFACTORY	2	At least 1, but less than 3 months experience. Liked working with people, but does not describe a specific experience or situation.
POOR	1	Less than 1 month experience.
UNQUALIFIED	0	No experience, or did not like physical care of patients, or describes an experience that was to the candidate's benefit only—a birthday party given by staff and patients, etc.

CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE ANCHORS FOR EXAMPLE OF PSYCHIATRIC ATTENDANT 5/3CA5

On your previous job (s), describe the people contact you had—for example, contact with patients, clients families of patients, coworkers, etc.

CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE

RATING	POINTS	PRE-SET CRITERIA
EXCELLENT	4	At least 6 months experience. Contact is similar to working in a DMH facility, i.e., a private or public group home, has interaction with patients, may have been responsible for reporting patient's progress, or patient's needs to family of patient, worked as part of a treatment team, or other duties to indicate direct contact with patients, etc.
GOOD	3	At least 3, but less than 6 months experience. Similar to excellent response as above, but less experience.
SATISFACTORY	2	At least 1, but less than 3 months experience.
POOR	1	Less than 1 month experience. Contact may be people oriented but not in a hospital setting, i.e., retail, fast food, etc.
UNQUALIFIED	0	No work experience, or did not like physical care of patients.

CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE ANCHORS FOR EXAMPLE OF PSYCHIATRIC ATTENDANT 5/3CA5

Have you ever used CPR or the Heimlich maneuver? Describe the circumstances and the outcome of your used of these techniques.

CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE

RATING	POINTS	PRE-SET CRITERIA
EXCELLENT	4	Certified in either CPR or use of Heimlich maneuver. Used it at least twice, describes time and place, describes outcome—patient recovered, or patient didn't recover because of some other reason.
GOOD	3	Took training, used once under supervision of nurse or doctor. May describe outcome.
SATISFACTORY	2	Took training—no experience on people, just mannequins in class.
POOR	1	Would like to take training, or started training, didn't finish.
UNQUALIFIED	0	No training.

CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE ANCHORS FOR EXAMPLE OF PSYCHIATRIC ATTENDANT 5/3CA5

Do you have any experience caring for the mentally ill or the developmentally disabled? If so, please describe your experience.

CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE

RATING	POINTS	PRE-SET CRITERIA
EXCELLENT	4	At least 6 months experience. Has related paid or volunteer experience. Worked full-time at a private or public residential group home, describes specific duties, goals of treatment, etc.
GOOD	3	At least 3, but less than 6 months experience. Similar to excellent response as above, but less experience, or has related experience, perhaps cared for family member diagnosed as mentally ill or DD.
SATISFACTORY	2	At least 1, but less than 3 months experience, or has related experience, such as a nursing home, day care center, or comparable facility.
POOR	1	Less than 1 month experience, or related experience in a nursing home, day care center, or comparable facility, or just started at a related job.
UNQUALIFIED	0	No experience or work experience not related—fast food, retail, not contact with mentally ill or developmentally disabled.

EXAMPLES OF A STRUCTURED INTERVIEW for PSYCHIATRIC ATTENDANT 5/3CA5

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	RATING (refer to legend)				
**********	4	3	2	1	0
1. "Have you ever worked for the Department of Mental Health (DMH) before? If so, did you work as a Psychiatric Attendant (or Developmentally Skills Technician)?"					
2."Please briefly describe your previous job and your reason for leaving."					
3. "In your previous job (s), describe the people contact you had—for example, contact with patients, clients, families of patients, coworkers, etc."					
4. "If you have worked in a direct care capacity in the past (Nurse Aide, Ward Attendant, Home Health Care Worker, Qualified Medications Aide, etc.), What did you like best about the job? What did you not like?					
5. "Think of a situation in your past jobs where you disagreed with a policy or procedure. What did you do?"					
6. "What is your experience in using a stethoscope? Thermometer?sphygomanometer?"					
7. "Please describe your experience with giving first aid."					
8. "Do you have any experience caring for the mentally ill (or developmentally disabled)?					
9. "Have you ever used CPR or the Heimlich maneuver? Describe the circumstances and the outcome of your use of these techniques."					
10. "What medical training have you had? Do you have CNA or QMA certification?					
11.Candidate is given copy of Position Description, and Interviewer describes main aspects of job: duties, shifts, overtime, dress code, misc. personnel policies, and physical aspects, such as lifting heavy residents, restraining violent residents, etc. "Are you aware of any reason that could not perform the essential functions of the job as described to you?"					

Rating Scale Legend

= Excellent = Good = Satisfactory = Poor = Unqualified

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APPENDIX A

TYPES OF RATER ERROR TO AVOID WHEN EVALUATING APPLICANTS

TYPE OF RATING ERROR	DESCRIPTION
HALO	The Halo error takes place when the interviewer allows overall assessment influence the total evaluation of the candidate. Thus, the applicant is not evaluated on the basis of performance of the specific items being assessed, but rather on the basis of the overall subjective impression of the candidate.
FIRST IMPRESSION	This type of error is similar to the Halo effect; the interviewer's first impression of the applicant dictates ratings on all the areas of the interview. If the first impression is favorable, all ratings will be high; if the first impression is unfavorable, all the ratings will be low.
CENTRAL TENDENCY	The interviewer is reluctant to give either a very good or very bad rating to applicants, and as a result, all applicants are given an average rating, even those who deserve very high or very low ratings.
LENIENCY	All applicants are given favorable ratings, there is no distinction between those who should receive good ratings and those who should not. In this case, applicants rarely get poor or average ratings; most get very good or excellent ratings. Failure to differentiate among applicants decreases the value of the evaluation.
TOUGH MINDEDNESS	This is the opposite to Leniency; all the applicants are given unfavorable ratings without differentiation between those who should receive poor ratings and those who should not.
RANDOM	The interviewer is unconcerned with the accuracy to ratings. However, to avoid being accused of faulty or biased ratings, the interviewer randomly assigns different ratings on a haphazard basis to give the appearance of having done a thoughtful job. In reality, the ratings are not reflective of the applicant's responses. Also, under random error there is a tendency to assign ratings haphazardly to expedite the interview, especially when there is a large number of applicants to evaluate.

APPENDIX A
(*continued)*

TYPES OF RATER ERROR TO AVOID WHEN EVALUATING APPLICANTS

TYPE OF RATING ERROR	DESCRIPTION
LOGICAL RATING ERROR	The applicant is rated high on one trait because the applicants rates high on a different trait. This occurs when the interviewer feels the traits are logically related. It can also happen with high or low ratings. For example, an applicant may be given a high rating for "quantity of work" as a result of being rated high on "quality of work," even though the two traits are independent of each other for that particular job. While the two traits may somewhat related, the interviewer overestimates the actual relationship between them.
SIMILARITY (SIMILAR TO ME)	Frequently, raters use themselves as a norm or standard when judging applicants. The interviewer allows self-perceived characteristics to influence the characteristics perceived in others. Obviously, using oneself as a standard of comparison interferes with the accuracy of your evaluations. Those considered to be similar to you will generally receive better ratings than those considered dissimilar to you. The opposite sort of error can also occur, when there is a tendency on the part of raters to judge others in a manner opposite from the way in which they perceive themselves.
ORDER EFFECT	This error occurs when applicants are rated against each other rating than being rated on each dimension. For example, if the first two individuals were excellent applicants and the third applicant was just average, the third applicant will be rated low in comparison with the first two applicants. It can also happen that the first two applicants are very poor and the third applicant is average; as a result, the third applicant is rated higher than he or she should be in comparison with the first two applicants.

APPENDIX B

Structured Interview

Critical Incident
Sample Form

Agency: _____
Job Title:_____
KSA: _____

Effective Incident

Instructions:

Think of an incident during the past year in which you were particularly proud of your performance, or the performance of a co-worker, and share it with us. The incident must be related to performance on the job. The incident may have involve people, facilities, information, or any other item that you think is relevant to performance on the job. Recalling the incident, please answer the following questions:

(1) What circumstances led to the incident?

(2) What did you or your co-worker do that was so effective at the time?

(3) Why was this incident so helpful in getting the job done?

(4) When did the incident happen (approximate time frame)?

APPENDIX B
(continued)

Structured Interview

Critical Incident
Sample Form

Agency:
Job Title:
KSA:

Ineffective Incident

Instructions:

Think of an incident during the past year that should have been handled differently by you or a co-worker, and share it with us. The incident must be related to performance on the job. The incident may have involved people, facilities, information, or any other item that you think is relevant to performance on the job. Recalling the incident, please answer the following questions:

(1) What circumstances led to the incident?

(2) What did you or your co-worker do that was so ineffective at the time?

(3) What were the effects of the actions?

(4) What should have been done differently?

(5) When did the incident happen (approximate time frame)?

APPENDIX C

Structured Interview

Cover Sheet
Sample

Job Vacancy: Program Coordinator 3/2WM3	PCN: 72001200001 00034
Name of Applicant: Mary O. Contrary	
Name of Interviewer: Betty Anderson	Date of Interview: 12-12-94

General Instructions:

(1) Plan, (2) Establish rapport, (3) Ask questions, (4) Close interview, (5) Review data.

Use structured interview form (s). Delay decisions until all applicants are interviewing and all material is reviewed. Encourage applicant to talk by asking questions in a clear, concise manner, and make sure applicant can hear and understand you. Know the EEOC laws and comply with them. Do not ask illegal questions! Do ask all applicants the same questions. Remember to tell applicants not to discuss the interview with other applicants.

Specific Instructions:

At the end of the interview, give the applicant the in basket written exercise. Read exercise to applicant and explain that he or she will be left alone in the room for 20 minutes to complete the exercise. Ask the applicant if she or he has any questions about the exercise and at the time, the interview will be concluded. At the conclusion of he interview, collect materials, thank applicant, and let applicant know when you will be making a decision.

APPENDIX D

Structured Interview

Question Sheet
Sample Form

Job Vacancy:	Name of Applicant:
Question:	

CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE

RATING	**POINTS**	**PRE-SET CRITERIA**
EXCELLENT	4	Excellent response sample.
GOOD	3	Good response sample.
SATISFACTORY	2	Satisfactory response sample.
POOR	1	Poor response sample.
UNQUALIFIED	0	Unqualified response sample.

APPENDIX E

Structured Interview

Scoring Sheet
Sample Form

Job Vacancy: _____ Name of Applicant: _____

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	**RATING (refer to legend)**				
**********	4	3	2	1	0
(1)					
(2)					
(3)					
(4)					
(5)					
(6)					
(7)					
(8)					
(9)					
(10)					

Rating Scale Legend

4 = Excellent
3 = Good
2 = Satisfactory
1 = Poor
0 = Unqualified

APPENDIX F

Structured Interview
Basic Guideline for Clear and Effective Panel Interviewing

Effective Questioning

Below is a list of "Do" and "Do not" guidelines to follow when questioning an applicant.

DO	DO NOT
(1) Make all questions audible; don't mumble.	(1) Employ a machine gun approach to questioning; give the applicant time to answer each question.
(2) Know who will ask what questions. Be organized!	(2) Assume you already know the answer or have the relevant information.
(3) Be aware of what you are communicating nonverbally in questions by tone of voice, eye movement, or shifting in your seat.	(3) Give away the answer you want or expect.
(4) In most cases, avoid questions that can be answered yes or no.	(4) Ask sneaky, trick or loaded questions
(5) Avoid questions that might violate fair employment practices.	(5) Be hostile, skeptical or impatient.
(6) Show your concern and respect for the other person.	(6) Ask more than one question at a time.
(7) Use direct questions to get statements of fact, ideas, plans for action, etc.	(7) Prompt.
(8) Pause long enough after an answer to be sure that the applicant has finished.	(8) Use complicated language or phrasing.

APPENDIX F
(continued)

Structured Interview

Basic Guideline for Clear and Effective Panel Interviewing

Effective Listening

Along with effective questioning skills comes effective listening
By following the guidelines below, you can improve your listening ability.

DO	DO NOT
(1) Concentrate; make a conscious effort to listen.	(1) Doodle or try to do something else while you are listening.
(2) Put all irrelevant matters out of your mind. Resist distractions.	(2) Let your feelings about the applicant or the subject affect your listening.
(3) Keep your eye on the applicant.	(3) Listen just for words or facts alone.
(4) Listen for meeting—for main thoughts and feelings.	(4) Interrupt or prompt.
(5) Put yourself in the applicant's place—try to understand his or her point of view and intentions.	(5) Express nonverbal agreement or disagreement.
(6) Take detailed notes.	(6) Assume you already understand.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ABILITY:

General enduring trait or capability an individual possesses when beginning the performance of a task.

ANCHOR:

Description of the quality of the preset criteria to which an applicant's responses are compared.

CONTENT VALIDITY:

Validity that demonstrates by data showing that the content of selection procedures is representative of important aspects of performance on the job.

CRITERION RELATED VALIDITY:

Validity that demonstrates by empirical (statistical) data showing that the selection procedure is predictive of, or significantly correlated with, important elements of work behavior.

DOMAIN:

Sphere, field, or area where all the data or situations within a given variable are found (e.g., test domain, work domain).

DUTY:

Independent job function comprised of related tasks.

FEDERAL SELECTION GUIDELINES:

(EEO Test Guidelines) published August 25, 1978, in the Federal Register. Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures.

JOB KNOWLEDGE QUESTION:

Structured interview question that seeks a direct response regarding job related information such as definitions, explanation, and/or procedures.

JOB SAMPLE QUESTION or JOB SIMULATIONS QUESTION:

Questions emphasizing a job's primary duty or duties. Examples of job sample/simulations include: typing tests, brief presentations, calculating statistical problems, writing a sample exercise, or a welding exercise.

KNOWLEDGE:

A body of information, usually of a factual or procedural nature, that ensures successful performance of a task.

MULIPLE CHOICE QUESTION:

Traditional paper and pencil test that asks a question and offers two or more responses for the applicant to choose from.

OBJECTIVE TEST:

Test for which the scoring procedure is specified completely in advance permitting complete agreement among different scorers.

OPERATIONAL VALIDITY:

Validity that includes the process of announcing, administering, scoring, and maintaining the results of a test.

ORAL PANEL:

Preferably three or more people trained to administer a structured interview.

PANEL TRAINING:

Process to familiarize, refresh, or instill an interview panel with the process of the structured interview and the pitfall of rating errors.

PAPER TRAIL:

Documentation of the entire test development, test administration and test scoring process to demonstrate content and operational validity.

PRESET CRITERIA:

Established, job related standard to which an answer obtained in response to a test question may be compared.

QUALIFICATION DETERMINATION QUESTION:

Structured interview questions that act as an extension of the application blank with query the applicant regarding job related experience, task performance, education, specific coursework, and life style experience.

S.B.O.:

Situation, Behavior, Outcome – a process in the Flanagan critical Incident Job Analysis that helps identify and record job related critical incidents.

SCALE:

Standard measuring device for a function. e.g. two level/interval, three level/interval, or five level/interval.

SCORE:

Value assigned to acceptable or better responses given by an applicant to a structured interview question.

SCORING KEY:

Answers to preset criteria used to score a test.

SITUATIONAL QUESTION:

Structured interview question that solves job related hypothetical situations. These questions are based on the Flanagan Critical Incident Technique (a form of job analysis). Critical incidents are drawn from actual job situations, usually based on the interaction of people and their attempts to solve a problem. Preset criteria (range of answers from very good to negative) against which applicant's responses are compared are an important part of situational questions.

SKILL:

Skill is an individual's level of proficiency or competency in performing a specific task usually physical (e.g. typing, carpentry or giving a presentation).

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT:

SME, the focus of the job analysis process. Incumbents, supervisors, managers, human resource personnel, trainers, people affected by the work (customers), academic, or private sector resources and be SME's.

TASK:

Activities that make up job duties. A task is a statement that shows what the worker does, to whom or what it is done, what is provided and what materials, tools, equipment, or procedures are used.

TEST:

Any assessment barrier between an applicant and a job (written, oral, physical, demonstration of skill, or an evaluation of training and experience).

WEIGHT:

Relative value given to job functions, test questions, and/or performance ratings reflecting their importance and frequency of occurrence.

WILLINGNESS QUESTION:

Structured interview question that explores an applicant's willingness to perform certain job tasks, work in certain work environment or travel, relocate, and work overtime.

WORKER REQUIREMENT QUESTION:

Structured interview question that explores an applicant's willingness to perform certain job tasks or if they have experience and training that will enhance their future job performance.

VALIDITY:

What may be properly inferred from a test score, or how much relationship there is between tests scores and job success, or how well the test measures what it is supposed to measure.